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Issue 26 | JULY 2000

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I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.
my species. I will not mate outside my species.

Tough as it is, you must resist. Otherwise, you could end up with something like Seaman on your hands. Oh sure, treat him nicely and he's your buddy. Slack off, though, and he becomes just another verbally abusive mutant. Remember that the next time you feel the urge to fiddle with Mother Nature.

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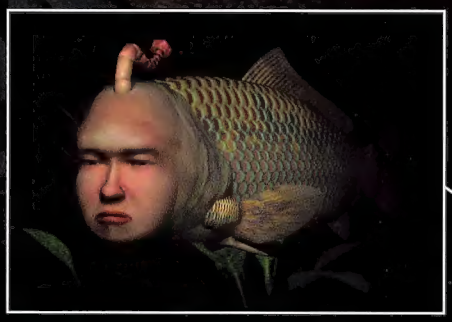

SEAMAN ON HIS ASTROLOGICAL SIGN:
"I need a middle finger to show you."

Sega Dreamcast.

IT'S THINKING

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gamers' Republic MANIFESTO

We normally pull out of E3 talking about all of the great new games on the horizon, but this year, for the first time, it was different—really different. While there were still plenty of good games at E3, I think it finally set in that big business has moved in for good and that if they have it their way, gaming will evolve into something that can be widely consumed by a much larger demographic than is currently embracing a controller. While in the long run this could be the best thing for everybody involved, seeing as how the industry will grow in terms of development and available applications to make room for the blue bloods, it's also a little scary. Gaming is hard: it takes years and much dedication to get good at. So, how will companies go about achieving the hugeness they so desire? Will new technology simply bring more people to the table, or will the industry soon be overrun by what used to be termed as alternative software? For now, all is still well, and I think it always will be. I just have to mention these possible scenarios so that if it ever does go that way, I'll seem really smart.

I think the notion of change really hit home at Sony's press conference, where they unveiled a convoluted four-year plan to "lead the broadband revolution." Although 80 percent of the audience probably still connects to the net via a 56k modem, Sony prodded on about how the PS revolutionized gaming and how the PS2 will now revolutionize home entertainment through games and other select content. Basically, Sony is now almost an industry amongst themselves and seem poised to further home entertainment as a whole. The announcement that any manufacturer can now license the technology and release a PS2 of their own further cements that fact. And now the PlayStation, with the advent of the new portable version seems to have an almost infinite life. Meanwhile, Nintendo remained the steadfast game company they always have been. They earned the most in '99, are leading in 2000 and didn't even need the Dolphin or Advance—the two machines that will further gaming as we now know it. I think Nintendo will have an online strategy, too; I just think it will have a pure gaming focus. I imagine that, instead of having to wait three years between Marios, Nintendo will provide new downloadable worlds as they become ready. Think about it. If it takes NCL three years to make an entirely new 50-or-so-hour-long game, why not deliver it 10 hours at a time, a couple of times a year? We could see the first evolving video games! That way the games we always say we never want to end—never would. Imagine new tracks every quarter for F-Zero 2001, an evolving single-player Mario experience, or an RPG that transcends bloodlines. Not some drab communal wasteland, but a rich single-player RPG that went on for years. As gamers to the core, that to us would be the ultimate use of Internet technology, and so something tells me that Nintendo is thinking along those lines.

Sega meanwhile has me totally puzzled. Judging by their showing at E3, you'd think that they are currently way out in the lead of the current console wars. Not only do they have great hardware that's easy to make games for, lots of third-party support and tons of great new games, but they have also made it easier than ever to get behind a gaming console. They have a bold online strategy and a great lineup of exclusive software. Since when does that not add up to big success? I am so elated by Sega and yet so disillusioned by their current status. It's like some strange paradox. To make matters more confusing, there were rumors circulating that Sega Japan was selling off big Sega licenses to Sony third-parties for release on the PS2! Sega of Japan deliberately hurting Sega of America's market? What's next—a Microsoft console!? Fortunately, Sega of America has assured us that this is not happening.

I'd love to shine some light on the Xbox, but Microsoft's plans are still brewing. Their big push will be at next year's event, along with Nintendo's Dolphin and Advance debuts. The stage is set for the next evolution of interactive home entertainment, and if size matters, we're in for a wild ride.

JULY 2000

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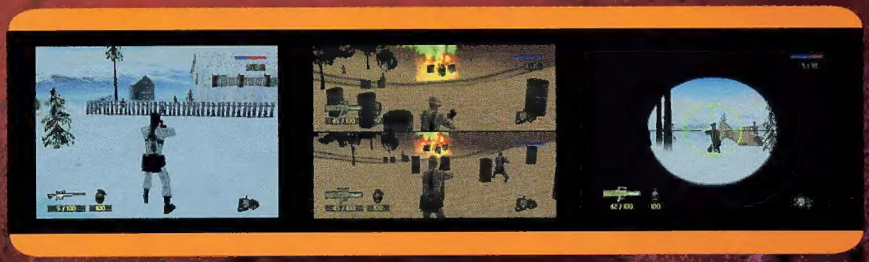

- Choose **stealth** or all-out frontal **assault** as you lead your team of Rangers into combat against **ultra-powerful** terrorist units.
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April 2000

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Reason for breakdown of transmission: unknown.
Fate of Vita 1 base: unknown.

- Through the complex, layered plot **follow** three investigators sent by Earth Control to **assess** the situation on Vita 1.
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- Strange and **violent creatures stalk** you constantly as you **seek answers** to the disappearance of Vita 1's staff and the **mystery** of the ancient Martian **necropolis.**

May 2000

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TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
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E3 2000 .24

E3 just keeps getting bigger and bigger. This year the L.A. Convention Center was busting at the seams as the now-gargantuan video-game industry crammed every last console, PC, game, and peripheral into the place, which was surrounded by crankin' parties, press conferences, and massive inflatable KISS balloons. We came, we saw, we covered...we're tired.

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TIMESPLITTERS .20

Looking for more creative freedom, four of the five team members responsible for one of the best-selling console games ever—Goldeneye—headed for greener pastures and formed Free Radical. Rare didn't have them killed, and now their first title, a ferocious FPS for the PS2, is nearing completion. Here's the PS2 launch title no one is talking about...until now.

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MONTHLY GAMING NEWS

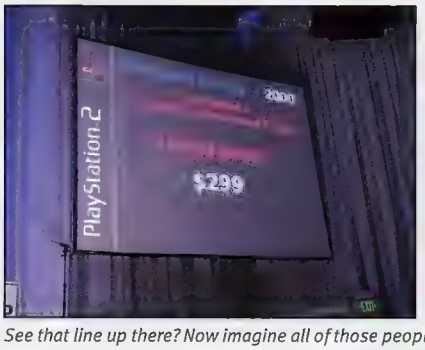
FRONTLINES

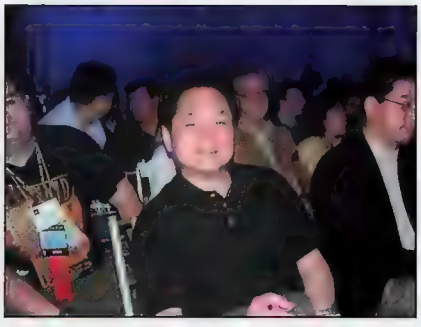
MULTI-MEDIA HAS A NAME...

"With the PlayStation 2, given its capabilities, especially as it relates to the revolutionizing of the broadband era, as I've said before, PlayStation 2 will revolutionize both the how and the what of computer entertainment. And therefore, the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system is not the future of videogame entertainment, PlayStation 2 is the future of entertainment...period." Those were the powerful, confident and braggadocio closing statements from Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) president and chief operating officer Kazuo "Kaz" Hirai at the end of one of the most anticipated press conferences in recent memory.

Throughout the informative but cold and unemotional two-and-a-half hour conference, held in a giant sound studio in downtown Los Angeles, Kaz and SCEA executives announced the PS2 launch details, confirmed the rumors that the unit will be able to be outfitted with a 3.5" hard drive and broadband Ethernet module, and outlined the company's broadband/online strategy.

Sony will release the PlayStation 2 in North America on October 26, 2000. There will be one million units allocated for the launch and three million units produced for stateside release by April 1, 2001. The launch price of the unit will be the same as the launch price of the original PlayStation — $299. The gathered crowd of nearly 1,000 journalists and industry professionals applauded at the unexpected (but often rumored) announcement. Kaz went on to state that the price for PS2 software (SCEA titles at least) would be $49. There are currently more than 270 PS2 titles in development worldwide. In regards to the launch software support, Kaz stated, "Needless to say, we will have the largest launch lineup in the history of any system that we have known to date. And all key genres—racing, RPG, sports, fighting, adventure—will be covered."





See that line up there? Now imagine all of those people trying to put food on a plate and then eat it in a glorified hallway... Great crabcakes though! After braving the food lines we all settled in for Sony's very long, very detailed strategy to take over the world. We were then hypnotized and made to chant "Sony-Sony-Sony" for the entire duration of the show.

The system's peripherals—the Dualshock 2 controller, 8MB memory card and multi-tap unit—will all be available for $34. Additionally, unlike the Japanese PS2, the North American unit will not require the use of a memory card to take advantage of the system's DVD playback capabilities.

After divulging the launch details, the stoic, dauntless SCEA president introduced the creator of the PlayStation, Ken Kutaragi, showed a mock version of the North American PS2 that Kutaragi-san brought with him from Japan, and addressed the mass storage and connectivity rumors. "The new PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system that will be available in North America will feature a bay (in the back of the unit) that will allow for a network expansion pack to be placed inside the bay which will house, for example, an Ethernet adaptor to which a 3.5" hard disk drive can be placed inside. This is important because this bay and the optional expansion pack and hard disk drive that will be available as a peripheral, is going to lead the broadband revolution. This bay is the gateway for the consumers to experience the full entertainment experience available only through a broadband network."

Then something unexpected happened. With the whole world watching, SCEA gave Electronic Arts most-favored-nation status by allowing an executive from EA to take the stage and speak about EA's 20 different PS2 titles in development. This finally answers the question of why EA did not support Sega and the Dreamcast. It almost seems that EA is now to Sony what Rare is to Nintendo. Only time will tell.

So the stage is now finally set for one of the biggest launches in video-game history—Thursday, October 26, 2000.

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YEAH? WE GOT POKEMON, RARE, AND MIYAMOTO...NEXT!

This was the first year Nintendo went to a trade show without its stylish leader, former chairman Howard Lincoln, who is now running the Nintendo-owned Seattle Mariners. In his place, Nintendo president and son-in-law to Nintendo founder Hiroshi Yamauchi, Minoru Arakawa (affectionately known as Mr. A), took the stage escorted, arm-in-arm, by the gorgeous Perfect Dark model/actress. And after she left to a rousing applause, he joked, "This isn't so hard."

The big news at the Nintendo conference was that there would be no visible presence or any information regarding Nintendo's Dolphin and Game Boy Advance at E3, and that neither system would be released in the U.S. this year. They wouldn't even answer any questions regarding the systems during the Q&A session. Peter Main, Nintendo's executive vice president of sales and marketing, stated, "We're extremely excited at the prospects for Dolphin and Game Boy Advance, but now isn't the time to talk about those because they're going to have absolutely zero impact on the well-being of either our players or our retailers or the industry-at-large this year. We are going to have a lot more to say about those products August 25 at the Space World Show in Tokyo."

This year, Nintendo will be focused on titles for N64 and Game Boy Color with some lofty (and impressive) expectations: the company is estimating to sell 10 million N64 systems, 10 million copies each of Pokémon Gold and Pokémon Silver in just the first six months, 2.5 million pieces of Zelda: Majora's Mask, and 35 million copies of the more than 200 GBC games in development from Nintendo and its licensees.

"If you came to E3 this year wanting to report on The Year of the Transition, I think that you came about a year early," said Main. "Because in 2001, this industry is going to see Dolphin. In the year 2001, America is also going to see Game Boy Advance. And maybe in 2001 it'll see the Xbox from Microsoft. And probably next year we'll also see meaningful supplies of PlayStaion 2. But right now, if you're not focused on the current generation of games, you're really taking a terrible risk and really missing the whole point where all the action really is at."

Hey, what about Sega in 2001?

JUST BUY ONE ALREADY!

At their big E3 party on Wednesday, May 10, Sega took the opportunity to announce another rebate offer regarding the cost of the Dreamcast and the signing up for the company's new ISP and gaming network, SegaNet. Sega announced that, from June 4 through August 31, 2000, there will be a $50 rebate given to anyone who purchases a Dreamcast and registers their system at Sega.com.

During that period, after the initial $50 rebate, the new owner has the option to receive a 30-day free trial offer to SegaNet, or better yet, sign-up for a two-year subscription to the dedicated gaming network and end up receiving a rebate check from Sega for $200.

YOU GOTTA' BELIEVE!

Late in May, the president of Sega of Japan, Shoichiro Irimajiri, resigned from his post, apparently as a result of the Dreamcast's poor sales in Japan. Taking his place is Isao Okawa, the chairman of CSK Corp., Sega's parent company. Irimajiri, who was one of the people most responsible for the Dreamcast's technical success, has assumed the role of vice chairman, and plans to take a more active role developing Sega's next video-game machine and/or arcade hardware.

Irimajiri-san appeared as the floating head in Sega's technical demo when they debuted the system.

VANGUARD BANDITS™

When Chains of Oppression Cut
When Bitterness Stains the Land
When Hope Fades from Memory

Those Forced Outside the Law
Must Rise to Become Heroes.

TEEN T
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PlayStation

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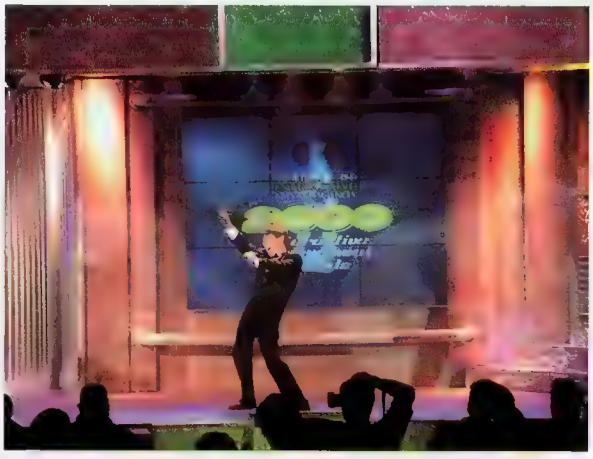
NOTHING SHORT OF MEDIOCRE...

The third annual Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences Awards Show, created by industry executives and voted on by PC and console game creators, was held on Thursday, May 11 at The Biltmore Hotel. A virtual hostess opened the show and then introduced the live host, comedian Martin Short (*Saturday Night Live, The Martin Short Show*), who came out and did a freaky little song-and-dance number before introducing the first presenters. The organizers hired several Hollywood "talents" as presenters, but by far, the best was comedian Harry Shearer (*Godzilla, Saturday Night Live, This is Spinal Tap, The Simpsons* – voice of Mr. Burns, Waylon Smithers, Ned Flanders and Principal Skinner).

There were 29 different awards handed out in the areas of craft (art direction, animation, game design, etc.), console, PC, and online gaming. In the most notable categories: the Game of the Year award went to The Sims (PC) (proof that paint was sniffed), the Console Game of the Year award went to Soul Calibur (DC), and the Computer Game of the Year award went to Age of Empires II: Age of Kings. Final Fantasy VIII took home three awards (Outstanding Achievement in Art Direction, Outstanding Achievement in Animation, and Adventure/Role-Playing Game of the Year), as did AoE II (Outstanding Achievement in Character or Story Development, Strategy Game of the Year, and Computer Game of the Year) and The Sims (Game of the Year, Outstanding Achievement in Game Play Engineering, and Outstanding Achievement in Game Design). (Who are these people?) The two award shockers of the show were Knockout Kings 2000 (PS) beating out Tony Hawk's Pro Skater (PS) for Sports Game of the Year, and Star Wars: Episode One Racer (N64) beating out both Driver (PS) and Gran Turismo 2 (PS) for Racing Game of the Year. Oh, yeah, good choice.

The highlight of the show was during the Hall of Fame Award presentation to Final Fantasy creator and Squaresoft USA president Hironobu Sakaguchi, when, prior to Sakaguchi-san's appearance, a five-minute clip was shown of the new Final Fantasy movie. It was truly awe-inspiring, displaying a previously unseen level of technical achievement. Sakaguchi-san joins video-game industry luminaries Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto (1998 recipient), and Firaxis' (Railroad Tycoon, Civilization) Sid Meier (1999 recipient) as Hall of Fame Award winners.

The more humorous moments of the show included Short coming out halfway through the event and performing an impression of a drunk Bill Gates; and a video spoof of the Wassuup! commercials featuring Mario calling Pikachu, then a character from The Sims calling in and finally a call from Duke Nukem. Although the show has been growing in both stature and production value in the past three years, this year's show was marred by teleprompter problems, poorly written and delivered jokes, some of the "celebrities" mispronouncing the game titles, and a presenter announcing the winner of an award yet to be presented. Not exactly the Oscars.



U.S. PS2 GOES PLATINUM FIVE MONTHS EARLY

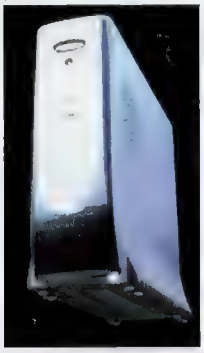
At E3, Sony announced an October 26 release date for their new superconsole. On May 24, almost exactly five months from the launch date, both Electronics Boutique and Babbages representatives confirmed with Gamers' Republic that they had stopped taking pre-orders for the machine. Sony announced at E3 that they will have one million units available at launch, and, by the time you read this, they may all be taken. Each retailer is allocated only a certain amount of units and the companies have already reached their limits, although we did contact Toys 'R Us and was informed that the company has not yet started a pre-purchase program but will start doing so this summer.

Celebrity-studded took on a whole new meaning at this year's awards as promoters spent all of $1.99 on talent such as Martin Short and that computer babe from V.I.P. With all due respect, though, you can't fault them for trying. Short's drunk Bill Gates sketch was timely and actually somewhat amusing, although the whole affair was about as much fun as an office-supply convention. At least they honored the right man—Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, who kept it brief.

SO 5 CONSOLES THEN..

Do you think the video-game industry isn't ready to support another piece of gaming hardware? Think again. At least that's what the folks at Indrema (pronounced in-dream-a) would say. The Oakland, CA-based company has its sights set on the end of this year for the launch of a video-game system based on the Linux operating system. Indrema has announced that its machines will use a state-of-the-art GPU from NVIDIA, which can be upgraded when more powerful chips are released. There will be several models of Indrema's machine: the first is the L600 and is currently scheduled to launch for $299.

When asked who their target audience was, Indrema's president and CEO, John Gildred, had this to say: "We're targeting high-end game users who really want maximum performance, who are looking for an upgradeable system where they can continue to maximize performance as they upgrade the GPU, who are looking for a new architecture. The Linux world is obviously a part of that target. We feel that those individuals can also help communicate to the rest of the public the value of our platform."



SO, YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU!

It's not the Game Boy killer that many envisioned, but Sony's new portable PS, called, appropriately enough, PS One, looks to usher in a whole new life cycle for the ubiquitous hardware. Due to go on sale in Japan this July for around $140, the diminutive unit will offer wireless online features through a mobile phone interface, and there has even been talk of a GPS car navigation peripheral, at least in Japan. The LCD screen pictured above will be offered as a separate accessory, putting to rest the rumors of a self-contained PS with a screen that many thought would be Sony's answer to the Game Boy Advance. In its final configuration, the PS One is simply too large to be considered a true portable, but for back seat gaming or hotel room fixes of Final Fantasy, the little unit will be ideal.

A U.S. launch is set for September, with final pricing yet to be announced. Expect it to cost slightly less in the U.S., perhaps even as little as $99, but don't look for the screen to be offered until sometime early next year.

BUY A DREAMCAST AND GET A FREE PLAYSTATION?

At this year's E3, bleem! representatives silenced crowds with — to put it mildly — an amazing demonstration of PlayStation's Gran Turismo and Omega Boost playing on Dreamcast hardware. Not only that, but the games actually showed smoother textures and higher resolutions on Sega's machine, running real-time and without hardware modification. The remarkable part is that, based on a recent bleem! legal victory over Sony regarding a similar PS to PC program, it's absolutely legal!

So powerful was the unveiling of the media dubbed bleemCast that the spectacle attracted the attention of both Sega's own curiously silent representatives, and more notably, the cold stare of Sony's Ken Kutaragi, who is known as the father of the PlayStation. Described as magical by chief technical officer and bleem! creator, Randy Linden, the program now, theoretically, increases the Dreamcast library by hundreds of titles, many of which were formerly PlayStation exclusive.

Aiming for a July 2000 release, bleem! representatives promise a retail price of $19.99, and will release the Dreamcast enhancement in bleempaks, similar to PC patches. Each pack will support 100 tested and popular PlayStaton titles, distributed evenly by genre and popularity. Four bleempaks are scheduled for release in 2000, with bleempaks A through D guaranteed before Christmas.

Between July and August, bleem! plans to release its own PlayStation-styled controller for $19.99, called bleempad, designed specifically for Dreamcast. Additionally, a bleempod, to be released in July, is a device that not only lets you plug in your favorite PlayStation controller or peripheral into your Dreamcast (including steering wheels, JogCon, and NegCon), but also allows you to copy your PlayStation memory card data onto your DC VMU.

Having been victorious in the PS-to-PC program litigation, bleem! is once again being sued by Sony over this new program. As expected, this is neither a Sony- nor Sega-sanctioned device, but it is no less incredible. Curiously, Sega has not released any official word on the product, but a Sega representative was browsing around the booth while we were talking to bleem!, and Sega-promoting comments from the bleem! press release leads to speculation about Sega's involvement in the bleem! software's development. "There's really no excuse not to own a Dreamcast now," said David Herpolsheimer, president and CEO of bleem!. "With top-selling PlayStation games selling for around $20, and Sega's new free Dreamcast program, you can walk out of the store with a new Dreamcast, plus bleem!, and four best-selling PlayStation games for less than the cost of a new PlayStation."

If nothing else, this product will be a great collector's item decades from now.

MONTHLY CHARTS PROVIDED BY NPD DATA TRACKING SERVICES
THE NPD GROUP, INC.

database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS

top ten selling playstation titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD APRIL 30-MAY 13 2000

1. WWF SMACKDOWN!	THQ	6. TRIPLE PLAY 2001	EA
2. SW EPISODE 1: JEDI	LUCASARTS	7. GRAN TURISMO 2	SONY
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	8. WILD ARMS 2	SONY
4. SYPHON FILTER 2	989 STUDIOS	9. SPEC OPS	TAKE 2
5. SYPHON FILTER	989 STUDIOS	10. MLB 2001	989 STUDIOS

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD APRIL 30-MAY 13 2000

1. POKÉMON STADIUM	NINTENDO	6. WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000	THQ
2. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	7. SUPER MARIO BROS	NINTENDO
3. EXCITEBIKE 64	NINTENDO	8. NAMCO MUSEUM 64	NAMCO
4. MARIO PARTY 2	NINTENDO	9. MARIO KART 64	NINTENDO
5. SUPER SMASH BROS.	NINTENDO	10. GOLDENEYE 007	NINTENDO

top ten selling dreamcast titles

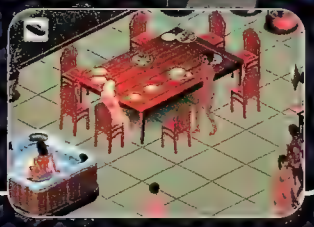
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD APRIL 30-MAY 13 2000

1. RAINBOW 6	MAJESCO	6. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	TECMO
2. RES EVIL: Code Veronica	CAPCOM	7. NBA 2K	SEGA
3. GRAND THEFT AUTO 2	ROCKSTAR	8. NHL 2K	SEGA
4. GUNDAM SIDE ST 0079	BANDAI	9. TOMB RAIDER: Last Rev.	EIDOS
5. CRAZY TAXI	SEGA	10. NFL 2K	SEGA

top ten selling pc titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD APRIL 30-MAY 6 2000

1. THE SIMS	EA	6. FAMILY 3 PACK	HASBRO
2. WHO WANTS..MILLION	DISNEY	7. RLR CSTER TYCOON: Cork	HASBRO
3. EVERQ: Ruins of Kunark	989	8. AGE OF EMPIRES II	MICROSOFT
4. RLR COASTER TYCOON	HASBRO	9. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE	ACTIVISION
5. WHO WANTS..MILLION 2	DISNEY	10. ALIENS vs PREDATOR Gold	FOX



top ten selling overall console titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD APRIL 30-MAY 13 2000

1. PMON TRADING CARD-GBC	NINTENDO	6. T HAWK PRO SKATER-N64	ACTIVISION
2. POKÉMON YELLOW-GBC	NINTENDO	7. T HAWK PRO SKATER-PS	ACTIVISION
3. POKÉMON STADIUM-N64	NINTENDO	8. EXCITEBIKE 64-N64	NINTENDO
4. WWF SMACKDOWN!-PS	THQ	9. SYPHON FILTER 2-PS	989 STUDIOS
5. SW EPISODE 1: JEDI-PS	LUCASARTS	10. POKÉMON BLUE-GB	NINTENDO

world republic top ten games

top ten japanese titles

1. ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK	N64	6. FEVER 2 SANKYO	PS
2. JIKKYOU Powerful Pro Baseball 2000	N64	7. EVERGRACE	PS2
3. BREATH OF FIRE 4	PS	8. YUGIOH MONSTER CAPSULE	GB
4. KIRBY STAR 64	N64	9. PAWAPURU KUN POCKET 2	GB
5. SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO: Soldiers of Love	PS	10. TEKKEN TAG TOURN.	PS2

* FROM MAY 8 ~ MAY 14 2000

top ten u.k. titles

1. WWF SMACKDOWN	PS	7. POKÉMON STADIUM	N64
2. POKÉMON RED	GB	8. JIMMY WHITE'S 2: Cueball	PS
3. POKÉMON BLUE	GB	9. GRAN TURISMO 2	PS
4. SYPHON FILTER 2	PS	10. TOY STORY 2	PS
5. MEDIEVIL 2	PS		
6. F1 2000	PS		

* WEEK ENDING MAY 5 2000

gamers' republic top ten games

* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH MAY 15 2000

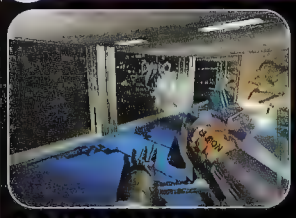
d. halverson

1. FUR FIGHTERS	DC
2. PERFECT DARK	N64
3. EXCITEBIKE 64	N64
4. LEGEND OF MANA 2	PS
5. SPR MAGNETIC NEO	DC
6. DRACONUS	DC
7. SPACE CHANNEL 5	DC
8. KIRBY 64	N64
9. NIGHTMARE CREATURES 2	DC
10. TINY BULLETS	PS

b. siechter

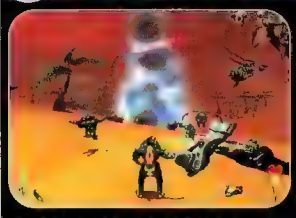
1. CHRONO CROSS	PS
2. MDK 2	DC
3. CRASH TEAM RACING	PS
4. BERSERK	DC
5. RIDGE RACER V	PS2
6. PERFECT DARK	N64
7. TEKKEN TAG TOURN	PS2
8. RE: Code Veronica	DC
9. BUST A MOVE 4	DC
10. SUPER METROID	SNES

mike hobbs



1. PERFECT DARK	N64
2. MAJORA'S MASK	N64
3. SAMBA DE AMIGO	DC
4. RAYCRISIS	PS
5. METAL GEAR SOLID	PS
6. POWER STONE 2	DC
7. WARIO LAND 3	GBC
8. SUPER RUNABOUT	DC
9. EVERGRACE	PS2
10. EVOLUTION 2	DC

t. stratton



1. GIANTS: Citizen Kabuto	PC
2. T HAWK PRO SKATER 2	PS
3. 1943	NES
4. MDK 2	DC
5. NFL 2K	DC
6. PARASITE EVE 2	PS
7. OMEGA BOOST	PS
8. ALONE IN THE DARK 4	DC
9. EXCITEBIKE 64	N64
10. NBA 2K	DC

pooch

1. SHENMUE	DC
2. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	DC
3. MARIO TENNIS	N64
4. PARASITE EVE 2	PS
5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	N64
6. PERFECT DARK	N64
7. CRAZY TAXI	DC
8. CRUIS'N EXOTICA	ARCADE
9. SYPHON FILTER 2	PS
10. TRIPLE PLAY 2001	PS

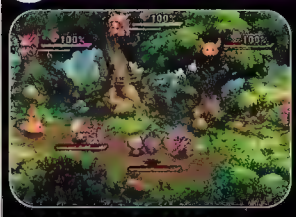
edd sear

1. METAL GEAR SOLID	GBC
2. DRIVER	GBC
3. THOUSAND ARMS	PS
4. DRAGON WARR. 1&2	GBC
5. LOONEY TUNES: Coll.	GBC
6. MEDIEVIL 2	PS
7. DAIKATANA ADV.	GBC
8. MR DRILLER	GBC
9. GRAN TURISMO 2	PS
10. DIVE ALERT: Becky	NGPC

j. r. haugen

1. SAMBA DE AMIGO	DC
2. ZELDA: MAJ.'S MASK	N64
3. SPACE CHANNEL 5	DC
4. ICE HOCKEY	NES
5. MR. DRILLER	PS
6. PERFECT DARK	N64
7. TONDEMO CRISIS	PS
8. CHRONO CROSS	PS
9. RHAPSODY	PS
10. M JACKSON MOONWALKER	GEN

c. hoffman



1. LEGEND OF MANA	PS
2. METAL GEAR SOLID	GBC
3. DINOSAUR PLANET	N64
4. ZELDA: Myst. Seeds	GBC
5. LUNAR 2: Eternal Blue	PS
6. LEGEND OF DRAGOON	PS
7. ZELDA: MAJ.'S MASK	N64
8. ROCKMAN 6	PS
9. TRON BONNE	PS
10. WWF W.MANIA 2000	N64

Sony finally announced the official North American launch date for the PlayStation 2: October 26, 2000. With its awesome graphical power, supported by chips made in a 0.18 micron production process that helps reduce the energy consumed and heat produced during operation, the PlayStation 2 is thought to be the most advanced gaming hardware yet devised. However, most analysts agree that it will take some time for Sony to achieve the market dominance that the PS currently enjoys.

At the heart of the system is the so-called Emotion Engine. This processor is proving to be a tough nut for developers to crack. The Emotion Engine consists of a CPU core that is expanded from a MIPS architecture. It has two vector processing units (VPU) and an image processing unit, and is controlled by a 10 channel DMA controller connected with a 128-bus unit. The VPU consists of an upper and lower unit. The upper unit does the 3D calculation in one cycle and the lower unit does the same in seven cycles, but it can give instructions to other units sequentially while clearing the initial instruction out of the unit. Unless data is sent to each unit in an efficient manner, some units can become idle, and the highest performance cannot be achieved. In this way, the task of the programmers becomes overwhelming because of the unique architecture of the Emotion Engine.

If programmers can succeed in controlling the instructions to each unit so that all the processing units are working together without delay, the result of the Emotion Engine's performance should be ground breaking. But here are the problems: with the latency on each unit completely calculated, programmers have to then manually schedule the instructions. In addition, programmers have to use very long instruction words (VLIW) for the upper and lower units respectively, using 32-bit code. According to an anonymous programmer, "It is like a complicated puzzle for even those who've mastered assembler."

To be successful in the video-game business, it is crucial for a hardware manufacturer like Sony to have support in terms of a healthy dose of new game titles from software developers. When the PS was released five years ago, the basic library for the PS was released from Sony. Because of the library, developers, including those who did not know much about the PS hardware, could utilize it so that they could efficiently yet cost effectively engage in game development for PS.

Nevertheless, SCEI did not release the basic library for PS2 as it had for the PS. Instead, all the information on the PS2 hardware was opened to licensees, and the licensees were instructed to do whatever necessary to create games. Without the library, developers had to create their own from scratch, which was indeed time-consuming and cost-ineffective. Because of this hindrance, those developers who could not create their own libraries internally are having a hard time creating games, which in turn affects the number of game titles released.

This is also true for big developers who have strong financial backing. Although it's less of a problem to create games than it is for small developers to create games, the costs are high, and the games released from big developers tend to be big-budget, mass-appeal games. There will be fewer of the low-budget games that account for most of the current PS titles.

Of course, SCEI does not say that it will not support software developers. The company instead made a contract with middleware makers, and are having them support developers. Middleware is software that goes between the development tools and the PS2, and it enables developers to reduce the task of the programmers. Ordinarily, in the process of PS development, after creating data through applications, developers separate the data into models and textures, then have to program to correlate the models and textures for display. On the PS2, however, one can display particle simulation data created in software such as Maya directly without programming. By using middleware, developers can import application-level data directly into the game environment, which reduces the workload of programmers, resources and time spent on a project.

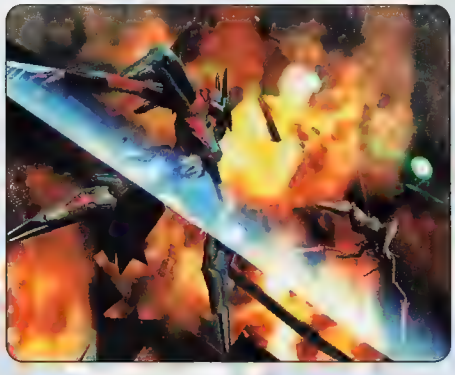
So far, several companies have developed middleware for the PS2. "The good thing about middleware is that it will give opportunities not only to small developers, but also to individuals to engage in the development of PS2 games," says Criterion Software, who has released middleware called RenderWare 3. The middleware is said to reduce a typical game development schedule by 6-12 months. The company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Canon, started developing RW3 in early 1999, and has so far signed up with some 60 developers, including Konami. "After evaluating all the available 3D middleware solutions, we selected RenderWare3 because of its unrivalled performance, impressive plug-in architecture and comprehensive multi-platform support," says Kazuhisa Hashimoto, managing director of Konami. Konami plans to use RenderWare 3 across various platforms including PS2 and DC.

TECHFRONT

BY JUN SAKAI AND MIKE HOBBS

It seems that the availability of middleware, such as RenderWare 3, is good for developers and may be the remedy for the difficulty so far encountered in developing PS2 games. But there seems to be a bit of a hitch. According to Mr. Miyamoto of Nintendo, "What I fear the most is that if everybody starts using [the same middleware], the games may end up becoming very similar to each other." Also, another game developer says, "Unless library makers can tune up the library when necessary, it will be difficult to do the development because developers end up relying on the library maker."

Bottom line: PS2 game development is still a burden. If a developer or programmer becomes skillful enough, then PS2 games can become unequivocal. If so, it is possible to make games graphically better than Ridge Racer V and Tekken TT. To be fair, SCEI never intended to make it hard on developers. The reason why SCEI released the PS2 with the Emotion Engine is that the company wanted to make sure that the PS2 was completely flexible for programmers to work on. In a way, the PS2 helps widen and expand the unlimited possibilities in game development. GR



MIDDLEWARE FOR PS2 DEVELOPERS

HELP OR HINDRANCE?

www.gamersrepublic.com

DID YOU KNOW?

- Namco's Ridge Racer V was one of the launch titles for PS2 in Japan. After the announcement of the PS2 release in Japan, the company organized a 40-member team and created the game using Softimage 3D. Programming and tool development were done internally using C and Assembler.
- In Kessen's real-time battle scenes, the characters are made up of about 4,000 polygons, which is about five times more than that of characters in PS games.
- The PS2 can display 100,000 polygons per frame, but 50-60,000 polygons is about the current maximum.
- VRAM for PS2 is 4 MB (2MB for display, 1MB for effects and 1 MB for texture), and is said by most developers to be too small.

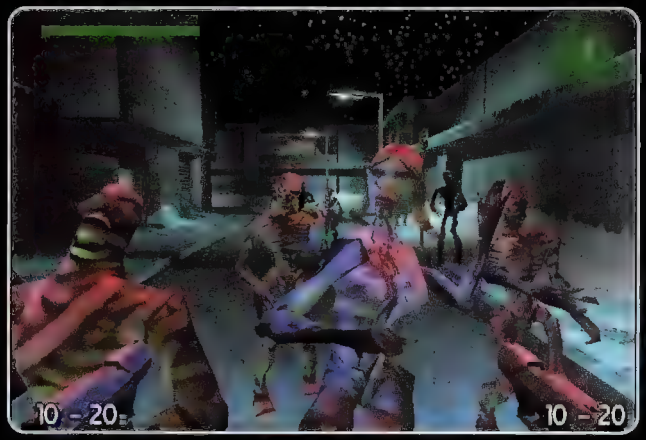
BY BRADY FIECHTER

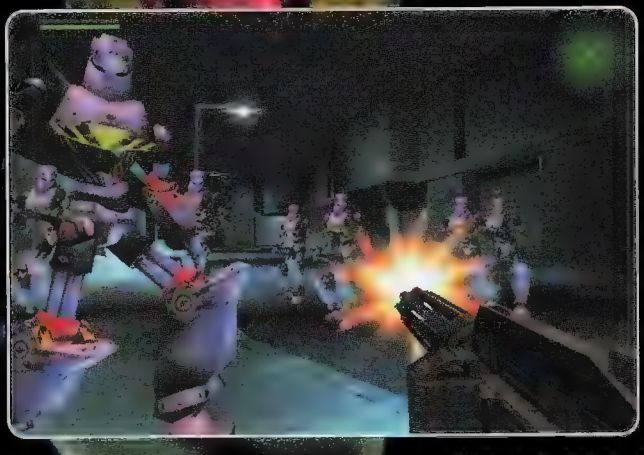
New energy gets pumped into the first-person shooter mold by the PlayStation 2 and GoldenEye-trained team of Free Radical

Timesplitters is being developed by the guys who made GoldenEye. It's a first-person shooter that aspires to the classic Doom model, only ratcheted up a notch with an assortment of fresh and boldly exciting new twists. It's got a ton of freakishly cool monsters that swarm the screen in double-digit packs. It's gorgeous and effortlessly fast. It's got really big guns that make some really big explosions. And did I mention it's being developed by the guys who made GoldenEye?

The collective vision forming Timesplitters is known as Free Radical, a creative melting pot filled by former Rare developers who wanted to expand their creative process. "It was wonderful to work on such a high profile and extremely successful game, but we felt that it was time to move on," says David Doak, Timesplitters' director. "Rare is a large company now with a number of successful ongoing franchises. With Free Radical we have more creative control and the opportunity to explore new game ideas."

And what better place to explore than the fertile frontier of PlayStation 2, where ideas are given previously unattainable form. Looking past the striking complexity of the world architecture in Timesplitters, you immediately appreciate the smooth motion through which everything moves. Console games have always struggled with frame rates—especially FPS games—but Timesplitters seems to throw around its massive environments without a care. To Free Radical an unconstrained, flowing engine is paramount to a game's effect. "Gamers were used to [proper frame rates] in the 16-bit days! Something happened



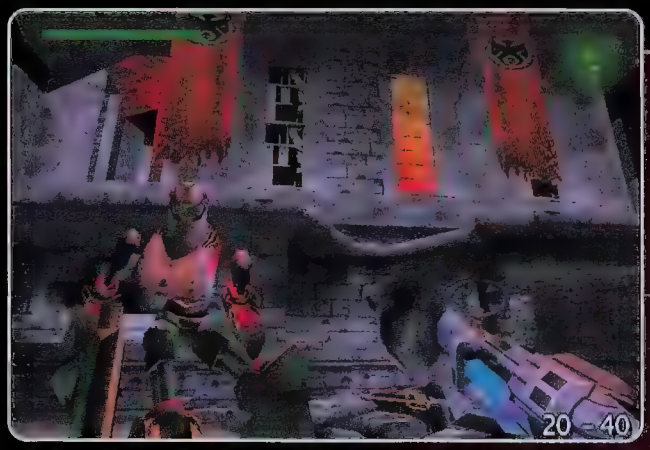


when we went to 3D: suddenly, [poor] frame rates, which previously would have been unacceptable, were commonplace—and nobody seemed to mind, or perhaps they just weren't given the choice. We feel that, for the player, poor frame rate equals poor graphics and ultimately a poor game. It's vital to balance the cost of the graphics and the performance available."

Mission accomplished. So now it's on to visual sophistication, inspired character designs and visceral gameplay to go along with that fluid frame rate—all qualities Timesplitters is exhibiting in abundance. And a little story and humor thrown into the mix can only help. The condensed version: the nefarious Timesplitters dwell outside the boundaries of time and space, occasionally passing into our cheerful world to sew a tapestry of nastiness into the fabric of society, leaving our heroic band of 20 or so characters no choice but to endeavor to vanquish the Timesplitters' destructive meddling. Doak describes it best: "Lots of little B-movies in one big mega B-movie."

Groovy. This game is obviously inspired by the likes of *Evil Dead*, designed to bristle with cracked sensibility and outrageous scenarios. "It doesn't take itself too seriously," says Doak. "Except in terms of gameplay. Think of nine separate action B-movie vignettes, different genres, different timeframes. Just everyday adventuring heroes doing everyday adventuring things—with guns, of course. Now, imagine as a backdrop to all this some really nasty guys who just want to tear it up wherever they go —and they can go anywhere at any time. That's the Timesplitters. They're the real baddies and they want to make your life hell."

Leading the destructive charge are ninjas, cyborgs, robots, priests, mummies, diseased humans, zombies, decrepit freaks, and a "few really nasty characters you wouldn't want to be caught alone with. Our initial inspiration was B-movies. The character designs encompass horror, crime, and sci-fi genres," explains Doak. "We tried out a few stylized characters and liked the look



of them. The game may be tongue in cheek, but I don't think that it will just be campy horror in style. That's a part of it, but there will also be some pretty realistic stuff as well. We might even make you jump."

While Timesplitters is going to bring new ideas to the design table, it is not about reinventing the first-person shooter, but rather going back to what made Doom such an unforgettably intense experience: if-you-see-it-then-pulverize-it gameplay. You enter a room, you face armies of the opposition, you unload countless rounds of ammunition.

It's going to be an endless battlefield of adrenaline-soaked action. But one thing Free Radical is quick to point out is that intense does not mean mechanical and monotonous. Enemies will be acutely aware of your presence, building up formidable walls of resistance that will take various points of offensive strategy to break down. "[We want the enemies] as sneaky and devious as possible," says Doak. "At the moment, the baddies are pretty confrontational, but we have a whole load of things we'd like to implement. The AI will be improving right up until the game goes into production."

But if the enemies possess the intelligence to keep us constantly engaged and guessing, will they support their movements with a sophisticated, believable presence? If you've played GoldenEye or Perfect Dark, you can understand just how important detailed animation routines can be to sweeping you into the game world. "We've devoted considerable effort toward making the animation as lifelike and emotive as possible," stresses Doak. "Our animation department actually all went to college together and are classically trained. I think they have had a lot of fun transferring their skills to a game environment. One thing we're particularly pleased with is the fluidity of the characters' movements: in-game traversal animations are constructed from a large number of elements."

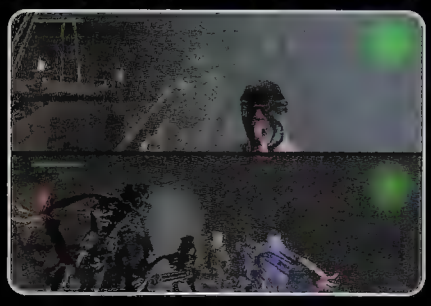
One of the more interesting elements of Timesplitters is the theme of time travel. Because the game moves through various times and locations, there is an emphasis on completely different gameplay structure in each period. For example, you may have to deal with more claustrophobic environments in a haunted house level, where the walls are like a labyrinth, tight and constrictive. Here, enemy encounters will be smothering and perhaps more unexpected, but when you move into, say, an old western setting, the level opens up, requiring more calculated offensives, like sniper shots. Even the AI will adapt accordingly. "Obviously, developing and tuning the gameplay is something we will be pretty busy with over the next few months. The intention is to have the AI and character dynamics work with the level layout—the zombie/mummy characters are plodding and use melee attacks whilst more advanced characters will prefer ranged weapons and could camp in sniper spots," Doak explains.

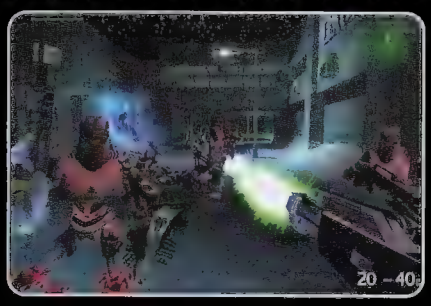
Whatever situation you're in, ample firepower will never be in question. "At the moment there are around 20 weapons and we are in the process of balancing their characteristics," says Doak. "The weapons fall into three categories, which correspond to the timeframes of the genres—period, contemporary and future."

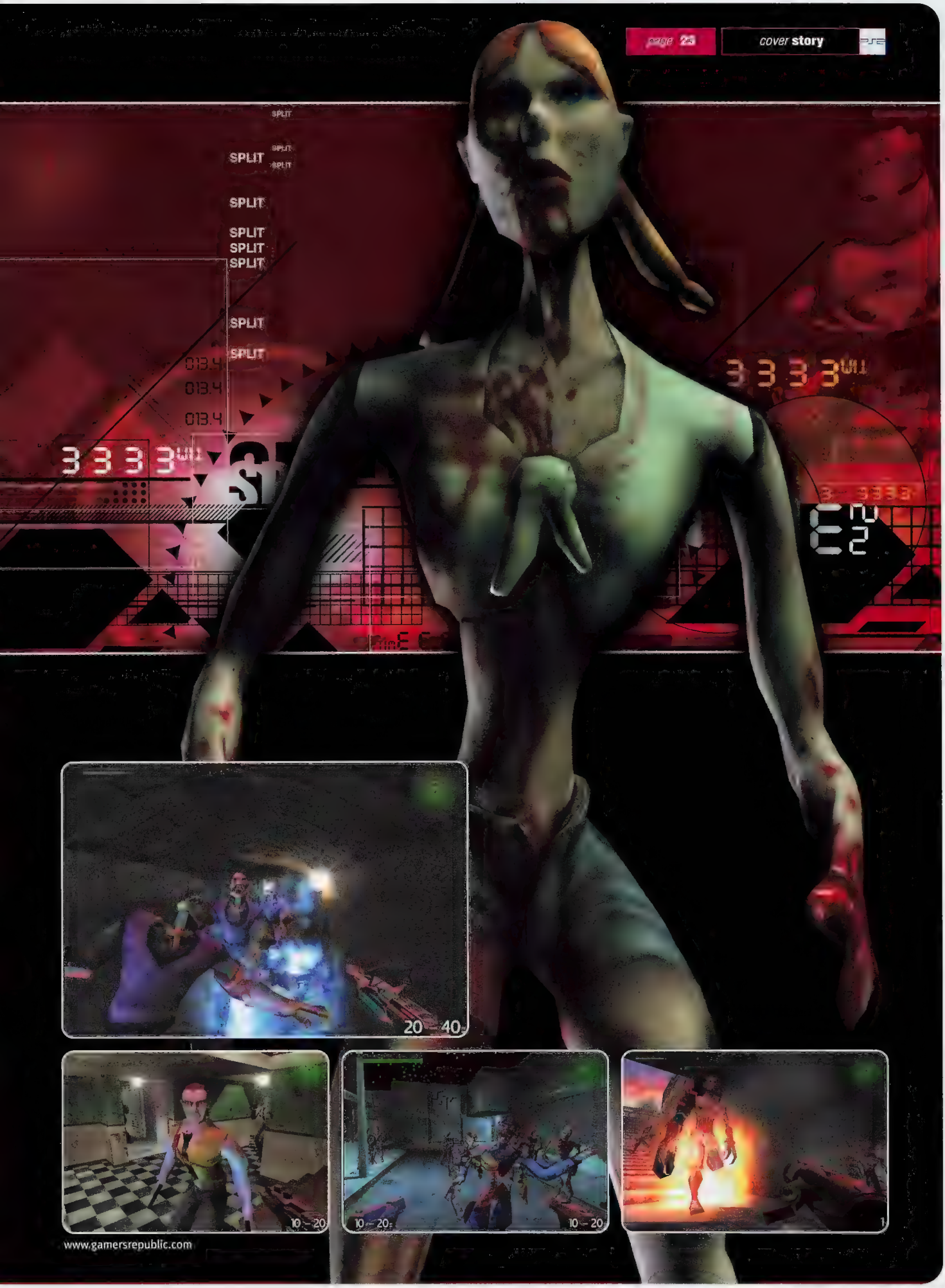
So you're probably thinking, Timesplitters sounds awesome. But what about the multiplayer options? Here's where the true innovation begins. Recognizing that GoldenEye's insatiable popularity was fueled by the death matches, Free Radical is pouring its knowledge of great multiplayer gaming into the Timesplitter's mold. And for even greater replay value, an innovative level editor is being intricately pieced together. "We all know othat everyone loves to deathmatch, and it seemed to be a good idea to give players the opportunity to extend that as much as possible. Basically the idea was to create an editor which didn't scare people away from using it. We set out to make an editor that could even be used by our mothers (although we've not actually tested that yet), and so the real challenge for us has been the interface design: the more refinement we put into it, then the more transparent and pleasant it will be for the user. All of the complexity is hidden."

Doak continues: "The concept is simple: you build levels out of tilesets which can be fitted together like Lego™ or TinkerToys™. The tiles are pretextured and there are several themes to choose from—for example, sci-fi, gothic, alien. You can place pickups and spawn points in your level and even set lighting colors and modes. It's simple to save levels to memory cards and move back and forth between the map editor and the game engine to test it out. A nice bonus from the tileset representation is that the levels take up very little space on the memory card; you should be able to save hundreds of them."

Recognizing that the lifespan of Timesplitters will ultimately hinge on the quality and depth of the deathmatch experience, Free Radical is sure to cast its experienced eye on the multiplayer design up until the final hour of development. And, of course, only when the single-player mission has been given full and powerful wings will the game be ready for flight. When that time comes, what will it all amount to? Says Doak, quite simply, "Lots of fun and a massive replay potential." GR



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acclaim

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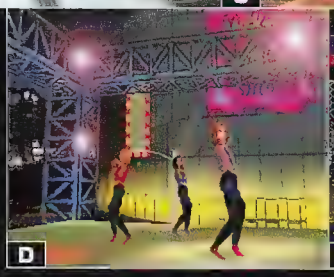
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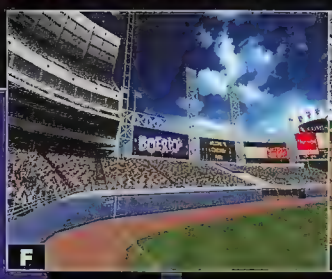
E

Traditionally, Acclaim has delivered the games behind the big licenses, from movies to sports to wrestling. And while they are continuing along those lines, they are branching out as well. In 1999, Trick Style and Shadowman were the standouts, but in 2000, look for Fur Fighters (J, K) and the latest in the Turok lineage to represent. In 2001 ShadowMan will make a run at becoming a bona fide franchise, with part two scheduled for the PS2. Along with their new original titles, Acclaim Sports will be busy with several new PS2 games: the hopeful redeemer for the last QBC, QB Club 2001; AllStar Baseball 2001 (N64) & 2002 for PS2 (A, F); and Big Wave Surfing, which will feature Pro Surf Dude Sunny Garcia. Acclaim will also release Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000 (G) for the Dreamcast later this year. For the PS, Acclaim will pound out HBO Boxing (H), which will feature the world's pound-for-pound best fighter, Roy Jones Jr., and big George Foreman—Lean Mean Grillin' Machine not included. On the racing front, Vanishing Point (I) looks absolutely ground breaking on PS, with an amazing engine, sans pop-up or fog, and on the DC front, Ferrari 360 Challenge is on the way, with a Ferrari title for the PS2 (I) to follow. Rounding out the racing genre, Freestyle Motocross: McGrath vs. Pastrana is on tap for a holiday release. No Acclaim lineup would be complete without wrestling, and so to sooth the savage beast in every 13-year-old, ECW Anarchy Rules (E) is coming for the PS and DC. Best for last: Acclaim's real coup comes in the form of Mary-Kate and Ashley Get a Clue (D)—I'm kidding—in Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX (C), which could be a Tony Hawk-sized product for the New York mainstay. And, finally, South Park Rally (B) is all new and greatly improved for the Dreamcast. Sweeeet.

00:00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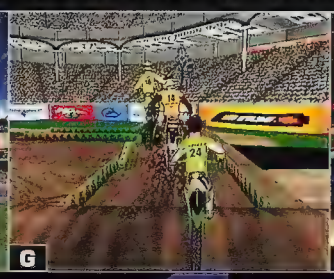
G

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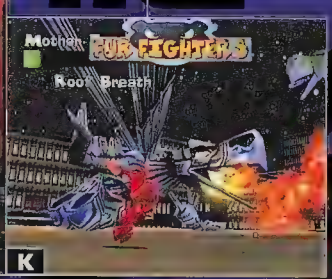
I

INSERT KEYFRAME: FUR FIGHTERS
00:05

Fur Fighters

Acclaim showed off some great software at this year's E3, but the standout is still Fur Fighters (J, K). This game has it all—action, adventure, shooting, carnage galore, and plenty of humor. How the Dreamcast isn't at 5 million with games like this around I do not know. Makes me fur-ious.

J



K

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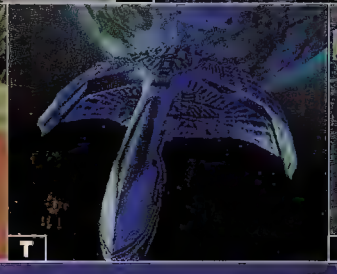

T

U

With Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (N) for Dreamcast, Spider-Man (M) for N64, Blade (V, W) for PS, and the surprise title Orphen for PS2, Activision seemed to have something for everyone at their booth. The company had 25 games at the show, with many of them being titles across multiple platforms. For example, Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX (P) (THPS, but with BMXers) will be on PS, DC and GBC.

THPS 2 for Dreamcast was one of my top games of the show. The great gameplay formula is still intact, now combined with the DC's graphic prowess. Tony Hawk has been good to Activision. So good, in fact, that the king of the skateboarding universe made an appearance at E3 to promote Pro Skater 2. (As if it needed it!)

Activision has more than a dozen PS2 titles in development, but had only three of them ready in time to display on the show floor: the anime television show-inspired action/RPG Orphen, a slick driving game called Street Lethal, and a western shooter/pseudo-RPG called Gunslinger (O). Although Gunslinger had a really bad frame-rate problem, I like the rarely seen western-era gun games, was glad to see the new title at the show, and will be one of its early supporters until proven wrong.

Joining the company's stellar lineup are X-Men Mutant Adventure (U) for PS and GB, Virtual On (Q) for DC, Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn (R) for PS, Buzz Lightyear (S) for PS, DC and GBC, Tenchu 2 (L) for PS and, finally, Star Trek Invasion (T) for PS and GBC.

blade

INSERT KEYFRAME: BLADE

Activision is bringing Blade (V, W), based on the motion picture and Marvel comic book, to the PlayStation in fine fashion. With the bad-ass vampire hunter using everything in his arsenal to rid the world of vampires, it's one to look for.

V

W

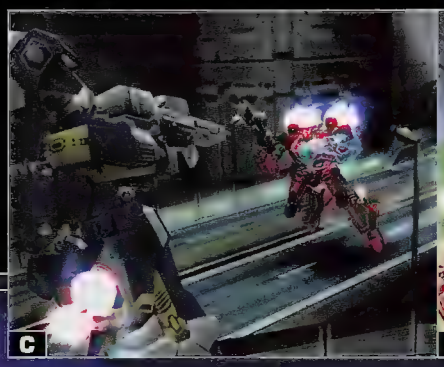
00.15

agetec

The PlayStation 2 was the focus of Agetec's show this year, exhibiting From Software's three PS2 titles. The first-person, King's Field-like Eternal Ring (A, B) joined Evergrace (E), a good-looking third-person action/adventure RPG. Their best, however, was Armored Core 2 (C, D), a graphically enhanced version of the popular mech combat series, which was set up for head-to-head play through linked PS2s.

A

B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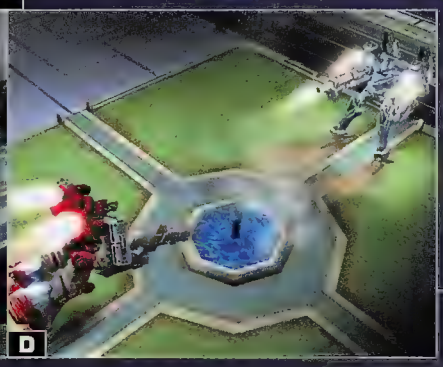
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E

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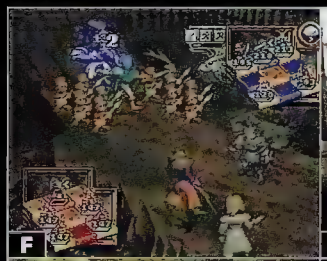
00:20

atlus

True to form, Atlus had a small showing, but what was there was top notch. Most enticing was the long-awaited U.S. version of the strategy/RPG Ogre Battle 64 (F). This great-looking game will fill a gaping hole in the N64's library with quality. The cult hit Persona had a sequel on display in Persona 2: Eternal Punishment (G), which is actually Japan's second chapter of Persona 2, with the first, Innocent Sin, still under consideration. Finally, Atlus showed their cute musical RPG Rhapsody (H, I), which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.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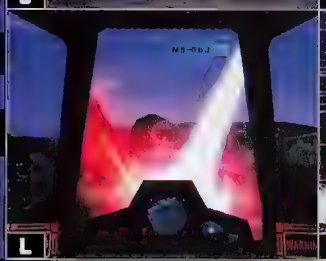
L

M

Japanese toy giant Bandai was busy pushing their tie-in games at E3 with two Digimon titles, Digimon World 1 and 2 (K), both due this year for the PlayStation. Gundam also figured heavily in Bandai's plans, with no fewer than three games on display, including Gundam Side Story 0079 (L) for Dreamcast, Gundam Wing: The Battle Master (M), a great-looking 2D fighter with some trick sprite-based animation for PS, and an untitled Gundam game for PS2. The localized version of Countdown Vampires (J) for PlayStation rounded out Bandai's lineup.

capcom

N

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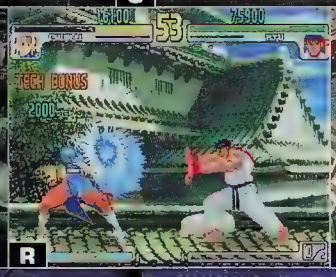

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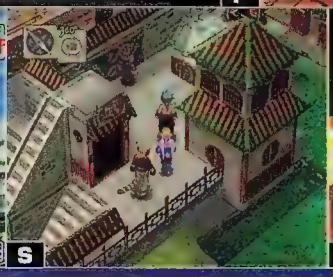
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T

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Of the third-party booths, Capcom was easily one of the most satisfying, with the largest amount of near-finished playable titles available. Topping the list was the DC Street Fighter III: Third Strike (R), frame-for-frame perfection of the most animated 2D fighter ever. Capcom proudly showed off stateside sequelmania via PS2's Street Fighter EX 3, the insane Marvel vs. Capcom 2 (DC), Power Stone 2 (DC) (Z), Breath of Fire 4 (PS) (S, T), Dino Crisis 2 (PS) (Y), and a solid Spawn (DC) (P).

DC's Gunbird 2 and GigaWing (V) made surprise appearances, proving that Capcom still markets intense, sprite-based shooters. But much love goes toward the stylish, action-heavy Cannon Spike (X). A sure hit when it reaches our shores, Cannon Spike's a smooth, 30-fps, polygonal isometric shooter starring Capcom faves Charlie, Cammy, Arthur, and Mega Man on rocket boots, teamed with a new champion-level snowboarder. Mega Man muscles onto multi-platforms with a 2D Mega Man X5 (PS), sporting a brighter color palette, more animations, and all-new moves (including a much-needed duck maneuver), Mega Man Legends 2 (PS) (U), and Mega Man 64 (1), using what looks like the Legends engine but with an N64 gloss. N64 gets a Resident Evil with RE Zero (W), looking as crisp and detailed as RE3.

Onimusha (PS2) (N, O) was perhaps the best-looking game of the show next to Metal Gear Solid. Based on a refined RE engine, Onimusha has familiar controls, but the prerendered visuals are striking, and they allow for incredibly detailed character models. Capcom vs. SNK was the unexpected treat, though, and at 15-percent complete, hardcore series fans were begging for more.

U

V

W

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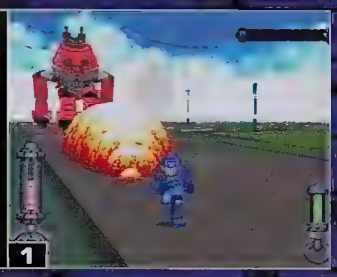
X

Y

Z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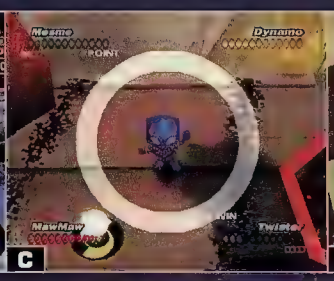
codemasters

A

B



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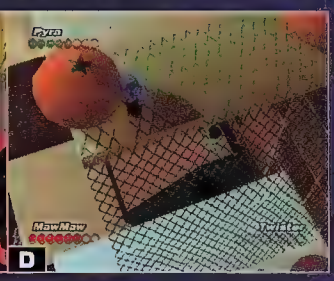

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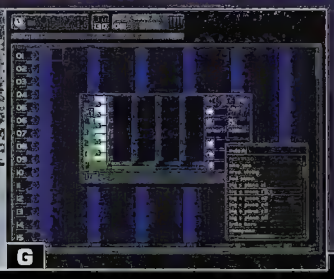
G

Codemasters' most high-profile game was Mike Tyson Boxing (B). When I asked Codemasters' public relations manager, Monika Moulin, about why they developed a game around Mike Tyson, she stated, "This game is about him as a boxer...about his prowess in the boxing ring."

Codemasters was also showing the follow-up to the well-received PS Colin McRae Rally, CMR 2.0 (A, E, F), which is being developed for both PlayStation and Dreamcast. Two other titles of note on display were WTC World Racing Championship and Micro Maniacs (C, D), the fourth in the Micro Machines line of games. Old news but still being shown was MTV Music Generator (G).

crave

H

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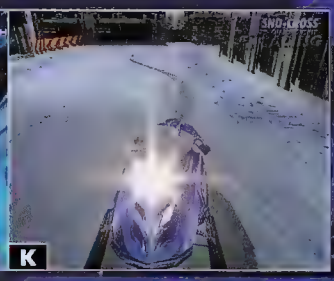
J



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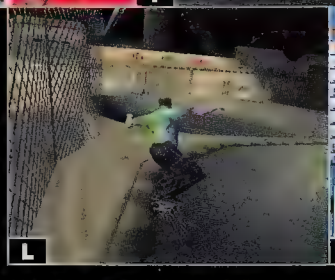
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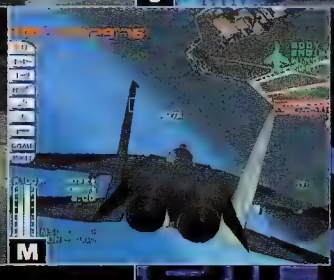

M

N

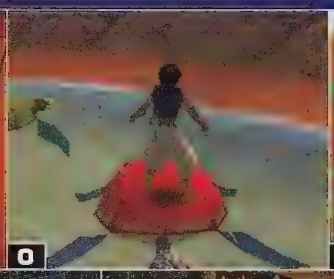
Burgeoning Crave Entertainment continues to show their game savvy with Dreamcast titles such as Super Magnetic Neo (N), a platform gamer's dream come true; Draconus, an adventure fit for a king (or queen, I suppose); Star Lancer, a space combat game which boasts eight-player play over the Internet; Tokyo Extreme Racing 2 (I); SnoCross (K), which is Motocross, sled-style; Tony Hawk Pro Skater (L)—you know the one; AeroWings 2 (M); MagForce (J); and one of the most talked about fighters at this year's E3, Ultimate Fighting Championship (H). For the PS it's all about Galerians, but Crave also showed versions of SnoCross and UFC. Look to Crave in the years ahead to localize some of the best from Japan and provide strong original content as well. I could do with a Neo and Draconus sequel right about now.

One of the most challenging platformers in years comes to the DC. With bright, appealing visuals covering the inventive magnetic-fields-based gameplay, NEO's a real treasure.

PROGRAM:E3 2000 | 00.20

disney

N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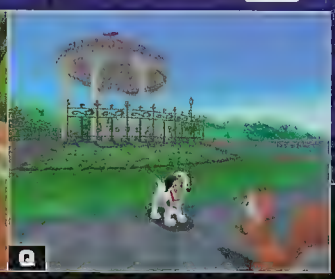
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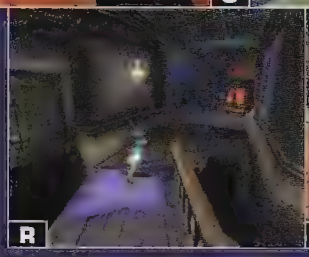

R

S

One of the shining stars in the Disney library was the 20-buck PC game aimed straight at the kiddies. Titled Donald Duck Action Game (R, S), it was one of the few games with 2D gameplay at the show. Buzz Lightyear (P) for Dreamcast looked great as well. So, do you think the breed can withstand yet another Dalmations (Q) flick? Remember kids, puppies grow up, and Dalmations leave big presents for you to pick up in the yard. Aladdin (N, O) was great fun.

enix

U

V

W

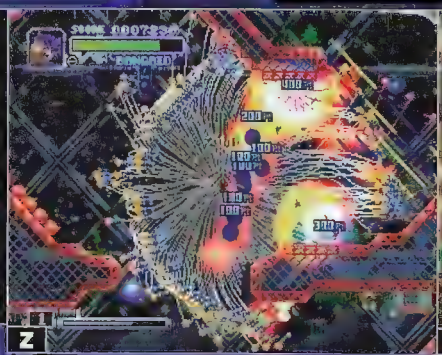
X

Y

Far from the all-conquering force that they are in Japan, Enix nevertheless showed off some great titles. Their dancing game Bust A Groove 2 (Y) was joined by the severely overdue Dragon Quest VII, still shown in Japanese, along with the Dragon Quest side adventure Torneko: The Last Hope (U, V). But the brightest light had to be Valkyrie Profile (W, X), a fantastic-looking RPG which should have a superbly translated script when it arrives stateside.

electro source

Electro Source brought a huge smile to our faces with a localized version of Treasure's gift to Dreamcast owners, the awesome shooter Bangai-O (Z, 1). We can't wait to review this game again in English. Electro Source also showed off Bugs Bunny in Crazy Castle 4, The Flintstones: Burgertime in Bedrock, and Magical Drop for GBC along with Daikatana for the Nintendo 64.

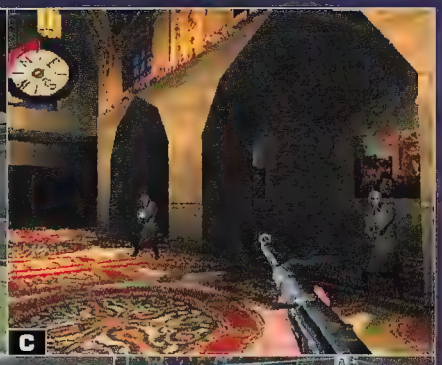

Z

1

electronic arts

A

B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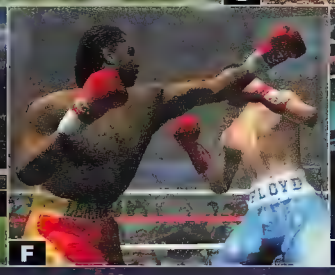
F

G

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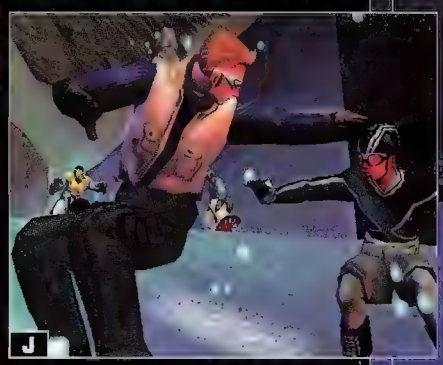
00:55

Welcoming folks into the South Hall at the LA Convention Center stood EA's unrestricted booth, enormous in size and in new product. In fact, EA's sports library showcased more titles than the entire amount of games being displayed at nearby booths. EA's big attention getter included WCW's Goldberg playing and decimating a faulty adversary. It was entertaining to watch both try to pummel each other, when it was obvious neither played games.

As expected, the long-running franchises like Madden and NBA Live were on hand for PS, as was the already-released Triple Play 2001 (N). Though Madden looked proper visually, it seemed to be running on the same engine, allowing the continual completion of certain plays for a big score. Knockout Kings 2001 has also strayed far from the original path, playing more like an arcade game than a serious and technical bout. One thing is certain—the games previewed for the PS2 look great: Madden 2001 (H), NBA Live 2001(I), FIFA 2001 (D, E), —the first EA sports game to be released in Japan before the States—NASCAR 2001 (K), NHL 2001, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001 (M), and SSX Snowboarding (J). But none were actually playable, so it will be a bit longer to discover whether or not the games handle like the games running on the PS or introduce new play mechanics.

EA's big non-sports title was the lackluster World Is Not Enough (A, B, C), an FPS that looked very familiar... And like nearly every PS2 game on the show floor, it was only there to stare at.


J

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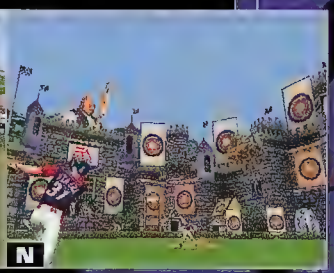

N

eidos

The indomitable Miss Croft may have been the centerpiece on Eidos' E3 press packet, but her presence was nowhere to be found in a new Tomb Raider game. Could it be that the PlayStation 2 version is so secretive we just can't talk about it?

Tucked away behind closed doors was Soul Reaver 2 on PlayStation 2, which shared the qualities of the Dreamcast version (X, Y, Z): similar to the original in theme, visuals and mood, only improved in all the right areas. All the glyphs must now be collected for Raziel to complete his journey, the world is larger and more complex, and gruesomely delicious touches abound, like the ability of an enemy to remove a stake when it's impaled.

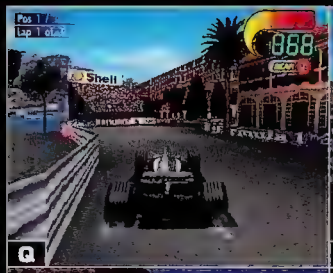
Already well into production is Fear Effect: Retro Helix, the prequel to the flawed but involving, story-driven adventure Fear Effect. Gritty, dark and richly atmospheric, the game is taking its adult themes even farther, adding sexual undertones to the relationship between the two lead female characters.

If you're looking for something a little more cheerful, the innocuous Magical Racing Tour (S, T) is getting polished for the Dreamcast, and 102 Dalmations: Puppies to the Rescue (V, W) is primed to smother the PlayStation and DC with saccharine action and adventure. Looking very familiar was the PS racing game F1 World Grand Prix (Q, R), and another Eidos sports title was the promising Sydney 2000 (U).

Created by members of the original Tomb Raider team, the visually interesting sci-fi action-adventure game Project Eden (O, P) is combining cinematic storytelling with first- and third-person combat. And in what is perhaps the most exciting news coming out of the Eidos booth, Core Design privately showed off a wonderfully ambitious game that injected their old-school designs with new energy from PlayStation 2. And get this: instead of using a weapon, the main character herds. Awesome.

O

P


Q

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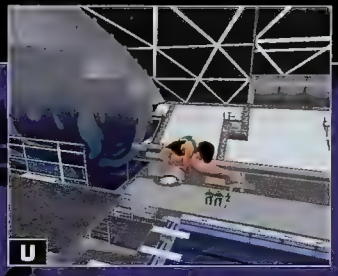
U

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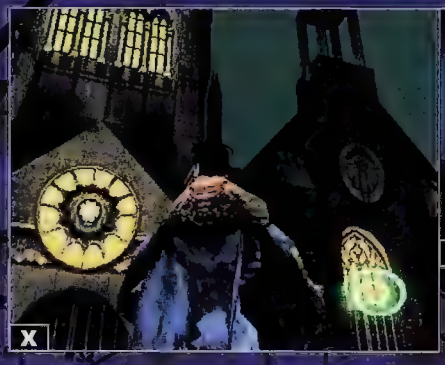
W

soul reaver 2


X

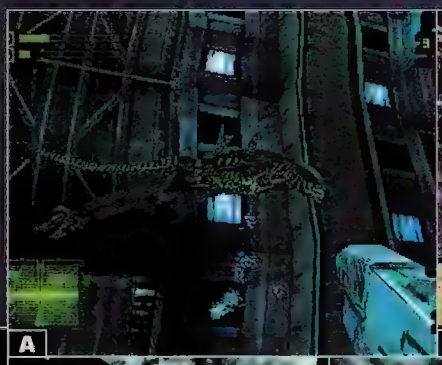
Y

Z

While at first glance it didn't appear to be a huge leap over the original, Soul Reaver 2 aims to improve all the areas where the first stumbled. On the list of changes are fuller models.

00.15

fox interactive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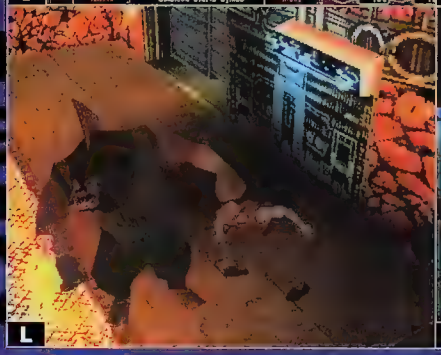
G

Fox had some goodies to show based on its popular licenses. There was the impressive Alien Resurrection (A, B, C) in first-person shooter form for PS and DC. Buffy the Vampire Slayer (D, E) for DC and PS was early, but still had some excellent models, most notably Buffy, who looked just like Sarah Michelle Gellar. Planet of the Apes (F, G) is a Tomb Raider-style adventure game, putting you in the role of Ulysses. Another notable was Simpsons Wrestling for PS and DC, featuring many of the main characters from the show. There was also Titan A.E. (L, M), based on the animated film of the same name, for PS. Who'd have thought there would be a World's Scariest Police Chases (H, I) game for PS and DC? For PS2 there was No One Lives Forever, a Bond-like first-person shooter. Then there was Sanity: Aiken's Artifact (J, K), a mystical adventure game for DC with none other than Ice-T doing the voice for the main character.

00:60

J

K


L

M

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H

I

g.o.d.

N

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P

Q

R

S

T

U

Wandering outside of this year's E3, adjacent to the enormous LA Convention Center, you couldn't help but notice the big-ass KISS balloons peering down at the beer-soaked circus G.O.D. was throwing to show off their impressive new lineup for 2000. News of their sale to Take 2 lingered in the air while KISS midgets frolicked about. I wandered over for my meeting only to be carded (at E3!?) by some L.A. City VIP wannabe and gladly scurried back into the Convention center, away from the area's bad case of outdoor- concert smell. G.O.D.'s got the games, but I'll have to wait until they hit the office to play them. Out of the bounty, Heavy Metal 2000 (R, S, T), Rune (O), and KISS: Psycho Circus (Q) all look spectacular, and they're all headed to Dreamcast. Evo 4X4 Evolution (N) should redefine off-road racing, Max Payne (U) also looked good, and Railroad Tycoon is God's gift to sim gaming. Glory be.

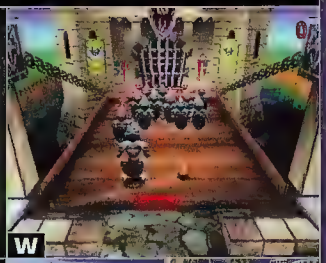
SONY

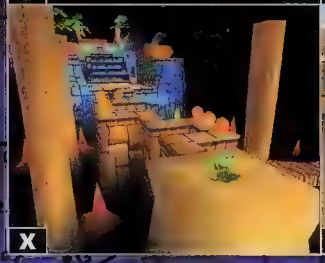
00:70

hasbro

Hasbro Interactive continues to honor the past with great updates of the classics, like Frogger2 (X) and Breakout (W). Galaga will get the royal treatment as well. And if you're not watching Action Man, it's time to get with the program. Not only is this a great show on Fox Kids, but it's coming together as a great game for me to poop on. NASCAR Heat (Y) and Nicktoons racing round out Hasbro's impressive PlayStation bid.

V

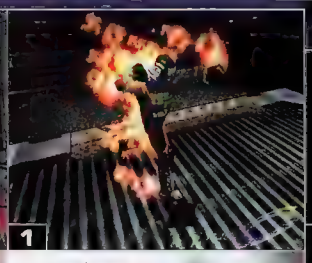

W


X

Y

interplay

Z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There is much good news to report from Interplay. Over at the Shiny camp our good friend David Perry told us that after Sacrifice (3) he's diving back into the console game, where he himself will again have at the keyboard, and Messiah (Z,1) will be good to go on Dreamcast in about 90 days! Meanwhile, Planet Moon is putting the finishing touches on what is surely to be one of the most-celebrated PC games ever, Giants (2).

00.15

infogrames

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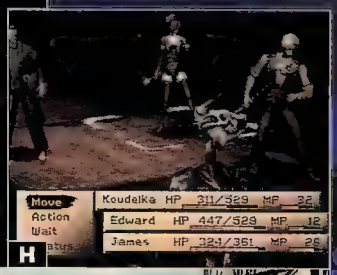
00:80

Infogrames had not one, but two big booths in third-party South Hall, and plenty of games to fill them with. We finally got treated to a playable version of Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare (D, E), but the catch was it was only playable for PlayStation. The environments were atmospherically lit, and it could give Resident Evil a run for its money. Another heavy hitter, which wasn't playable, was the incredible Munch's Oddysee for PlayStation 2 (A, B). If it only manages to play like the first two games while possessing these beautiful visuals, the game will surely find the top ten list at year's end. Unreal Tournament (C, F, G) for PS2 is a surefire hit, looking extremely smooth. Wacky Races for Dreamcast is a fun kart game that captures the quirky cartoon qualities of the show perfectly. A localized version of the slow-paced horror title Koudelka (H) was shown, as was the RC car racer Stunt GP (M), which could be a sleeper this year. Driver 2 (I, J, K) expands upon the original, adding four new cities (Las Vegas, Havana, Rio, and Chicago). A couple of other notable titles were Duck Dodgers (L), a 3D platformer for N64, and N-Gen Racing (N,O) for PlayStation. The PC hit Silver (P) was also looking good on the Dreamcast.

It seems the Test Drive series is around for a while with no fewer than



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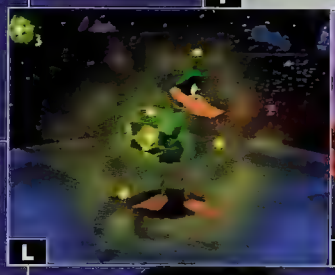
L

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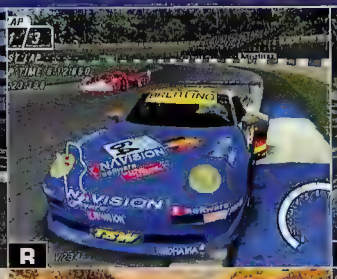
O

infogrames

P

Q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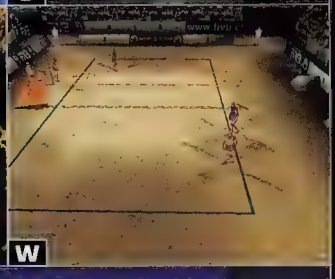
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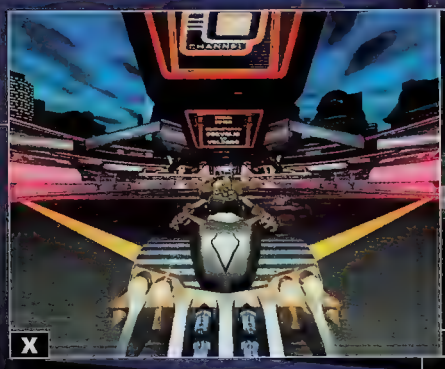
X

Y

three incarnations on the show floor: Test Drive Cycles (Q), Test Drive Le Mans, and Test Drive V-Rally (R, S), all for Dreamcast. Other racing games included Indy Racing 2000 for N64 (T), Demolition Racer No Exit (V) for DC, and Motor Mayhem (X, Y) for PS2. On the sports side, there were titles such as Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball (W), Ronaldo V-Football (Z), and Golden Tee Golf (1) to play, all on PlayStation. There was also Boarderzone for DC (2). Some of the more fanciful titles shown were Looney Toons Space Race (3) for DC, Looney Toons Sheep, Dog, & Wolf (4) for PS, Looney Toons Racing for PS, Taz Express for N64, Bugs Bunny and Taz: Time Busters (5) for PS, and of course Animorphs (6) for PS. And who could forget PlayStation's Hogs of War (7)?

Z

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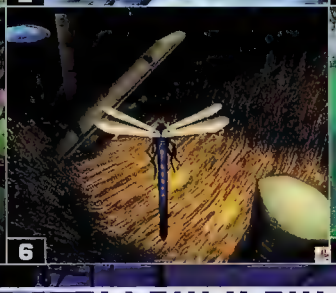
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INSERT KEYFRAME: METAL GEAR SOLID 2

metal gear solid 2

01:00

konami

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01:05

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F

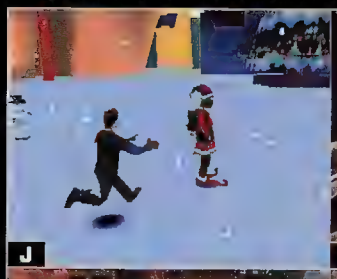
G

H

Konami really only needed one screen at this year's E3—just one screen looping the now legendary Metal Gear Solid 2 (A-H) demo reel. Seeing this game in action, in what director/screenwriter Hideo Kojima claimed was 100 percent in-game footage, was probably the single most amazing moment from any E3 show I've attended. For the first time, the true potential of the PS2 was displayed in a form that was unequivocal. What we saw on video simply left our jaws scraping the floor. Drops of rain pelted Solid Snake's excruciatingly well-modeled body; flashlights cast perfect shadows throughout the intricately conceived ship interiors; glass would shatter into seemingly thousands of pieces, and then flow around the scenery as gravity pulled it towards the earth; machine gun fire exploded cans filled with liquid. In short, it represented the most convincing re-creation of reality that anyone has ever seen in a video game, and it was all presented with Kojima-san's highly attuned sense of cinematic flair. We know this man to be a game design genius, and the end result will no doubt be a milestone in the history of gaming. Fall 2001 is the current release date.

Of course, Konami had other games to show off, and following the charge of the MGS2 video was a subtitled version of the Zone of the Enders demo shown at TGS, and Shadow of Destiny (I), another PS2 stunner that could be considered a thematic follow-up of sorts to Silent Hill, featuring a mind-bending time-travel scenario. The rest of Konami's broad line-up consisted of licensed fare such as The Grinch (PS, DC) (J), The Mummy (DC, PS, GBC) (K), and Woody Woodpecker Racing (PS, GBC) (L), along with numerous sports titles including Baseball Tonight (DC) (M), NBA Tonight (PS, PS2, DC) (N), MLS Game Night (PS), International Track and Field (PS, PS2) (O), X Games Snowboarding (PS, PS2) (P), and Bass Fishing (PS). Rounding out Konami's plate was a PS2/DC version of Microsoft's Age of Empires II (Q), Monster Force for PS and GBC, and Gradius III and IV for PS2.

I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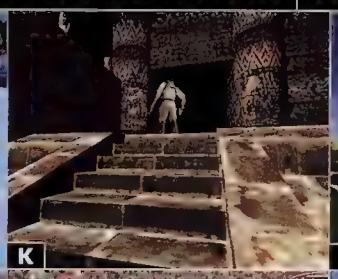
K

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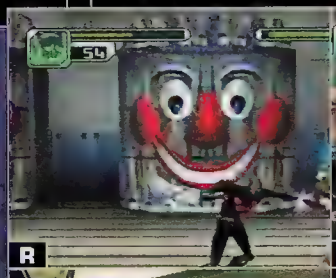
Q

kemco

Kemco continued to expand on its Top Gear series, this time on the PlayStation 2. Top Gear Daredevil (T, U) takes a sort of Driver/Runabout approach, with sprawling urban environments and massive levels of scenery destruction. It should be the first game of its kind released for PS2. Kemco also showed off PS and N64 versions of Batman Beyond (R, S), based on the new animated series. Loosely resembling a 3D version of Konami's Batman Returns on SNES, BB was still very early.


R

S

T

U

koei

V

W

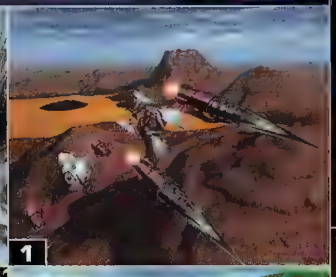
X

Y

Dynasty Warriors 2 (V, W) thrilled audiences at this year's E3. Koei's sequel to the solid one-on-one fighter was an exciting dose of action, with screen-filling hordes of enemies being laid to waste. There was some slow down, but expect the final version to be a great PS2 action game. Kessen (X,Y) was also shown, though it was still in Japanese, and will be published in America by Electronic Arts.

lucas

Z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LucasArts showcased Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine (Z), which has been given new cameras and controls, and plays a lot like Mario 64. Battle for Naboo (3) is the successor to Rogue Squadron. Starfighter (1) looks radiant for PS2. Super Bombad Racing (2) blends Star Wars and kart racing, coming to DC and PS2 next year. Star Wars Demolition, a vehicular combat title by Luxoflux, will be available for PS later this year. Also announced was Jedi Power Battles for DC.

mattel

With former Sega chief Bernie Stolar at the helm, Mattel is positioning itself to be taken seriously in the home-console gaming industry. To that extent, the company is remaking one of the great side scrollers, Prince of Persia (7), into a 3D game for Dreamcast. Also coming to the DC is the Treyarch-developed Max Steel (5), a 3D action game based on Mattel's popular toy line and TV show. Billabong Pro Surfer (4) for PS and DC will help push the company into the limelight, and the fighter Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots Arena (6), based on the classic, head-popping toy fighter, looks surprisingly good.

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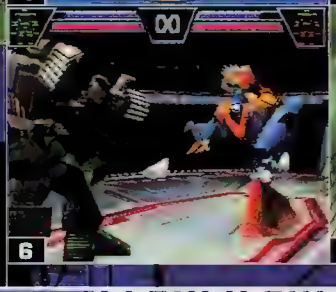
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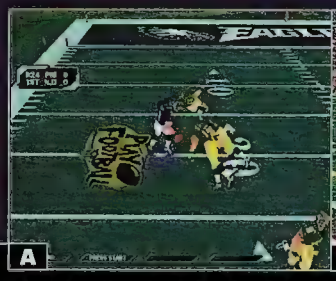
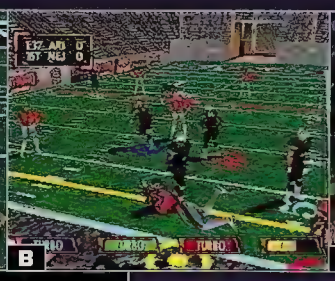
midway



A


B

C

D

With its wide variety of games across multiple platforms, a dozen beautiful cheerleaders, and a bizarre announcement, Midway had one of the most active booths.

Midway announced that Michael Jackson has been motion captured and voice recorded for inclusion as a hidden character in Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2 (E).

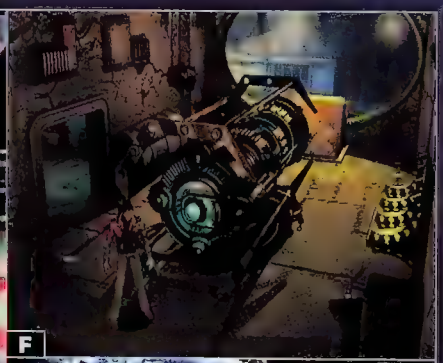
Also announced was Midway Sports Asylum to hold all of their over-the-top games, such as NFL Blitz 2001 (B), R2RB:R2, and Arena Football Unleashed (A).

Helping to promote a life outside of the house, Midway keeps faithful to its arcade heritage with S.F. Rush 2049 (J), Skins Game (a fun golfing game), Gauntlet: Dark Legacy (C), CART Fury, Cruis'n Exotica and Off-Road Thunder.

On the PS2 front, Midway showed Legion: Legend of Excalibur to us behind closed doors, and the game boasts amazing character detail. Also exciting was the footage of the Paradigm Entertainment (PilotWings 64) -developed Spy Hunter. Midway will continue their arcade basketball heritage, but are moving from 2-on-2 play to 3-on-3 with the new NBA Hoopz. Of course R2RB:R2 is on its way to the new Sony system, as is Gauntlet: Dark Legacy.

Finally, mention must be made about Midway's great PSX showcase: a brilliant platform game called Deuce (H), a very playable Team Buddies (N), MK Special Forces (K), Rampage Through Time (I), Roll Cage Stage 2 (M), Destruction Derby Raw (G), Colony Wars III: Red Sun (L) and the captivating, 50+ hour adventure game called In Cold Blood (F).

E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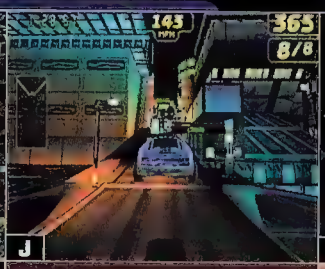

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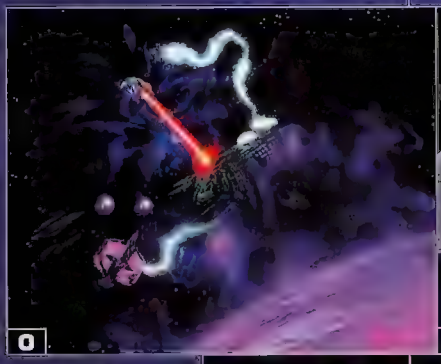
metro 3d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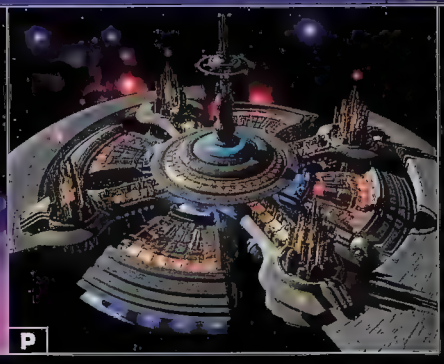

P

Mark my words: 12-year Capcom USA veteran Yoshihito Nakayama and his game developer/publisher Metro3D is a company to watch. With Armada for Dreamcast already under its belt, the company used E3 to debut four titles: the intriguing DC title Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse (Q, R, S), Armada 2: Exodus (O, P) for PS2 and DC and Armada F/X Racers for GBC. All three games looked and played quite well, especially the beautiful Vampire Apocalypse. Metro3D also has another PS2 title in development, Dark Angel II.

Q

R

S

01:25

01:30

namco

Namco is still the brightest light in the Ps2 sky with the awesome Ridge Racer V (T) and Tekken Tag Tournament (U), plus they announced a port of the arcade game Moto GP (W), a sleek motorcycle game and welcome addition to the PS2 lineup. Puzzle game fans are in luck, as Mr. Driller (Y) is coming to DC and PS, and the shockingly addictive Ms. Pac-Man: Maze Madness (X) is destined for PS, N64 and DC. Unfortunately, the only other DC game was Namco Museum. Rounding out the PS lineup were the fun action-RPG Dragon Valor (V) and the long-awaited light-gun sequel, Time Crisis: Project Titan (Z).

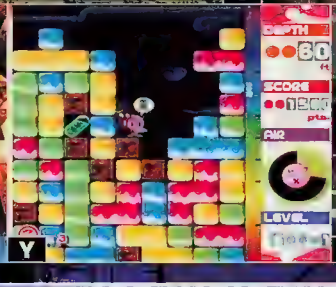
T

U

V

W

X


Y

Z

01:35

nintendo

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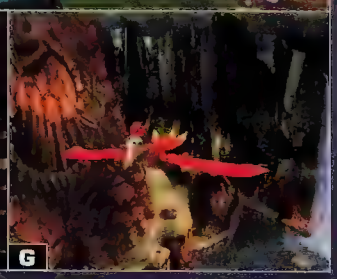

G

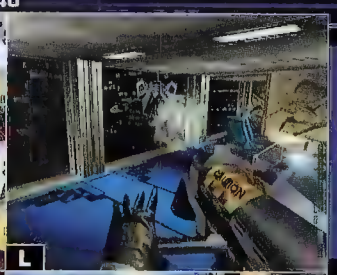
Nintendo easily had the most rock-solid line-up at the show, with hardly a single game that didn't impress. Rare had no fewer than five titles on display, and the one that hit the hardest was Conker's Bad Fur Day (A, B, C). Believe us when we say that you have never seen anything like this in a Nintendo game. The game is vile: there was a playable level in which Conker gets drunk and urinates on his fiery enemies, then vomits...Ninten-doh! Banjo-Tooie (D-G) was there, and looked and played just like the original, with new characters, new items, and gigantic environments and bosses, including a mammoth inflatable monster that you defeat by shooting out its dozens of patches, from the ground and from the air. Dinosaur planet (H, I) was also looking great, with a variety of vehicle-based and platforming levels (including a Panzer Dragoon-style battle where you take out a huge flying galleon while riding a pterosaur). The game has a similar feel to Jet Force Gemini, so there's no doubt we'll love it. Rare wasn't just showing off 3D platformers, however, as Mickey's Speedway USA (J) showcased their racing prowess, featuring the classic Disney characters and playing a lot like Mario Kart. Finally there was a finished Perfect Dark (K-N), a perfect successor to the classic GoldenEye.

H

I

J

K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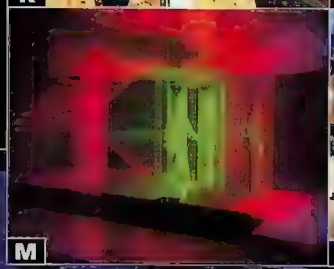
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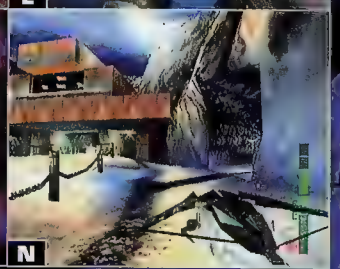
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nintendo

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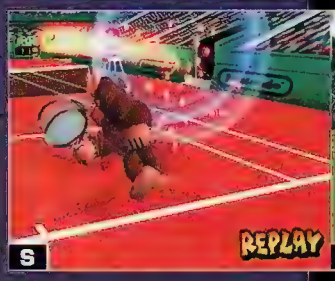

S

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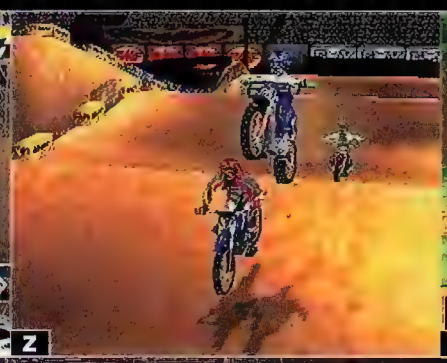
W

X

Nintendo was giving out free Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (O-R) pins to people who played it, but we needed no incentive. It was at least partially in English, and showed off some of the cooler levels later in the game, like a race where Goron Link tumbles down a snowy mountain. Mario Tennis (S, T, U) drew huge crowds and played like a dream, with playable characters such as Toad, Baby Mario, and the ultra-evil Waluigi, who is sure to become a staple in the growing Mario universe. Speaking of Mario, the long-awaited sequel to Super Mario RPG, Paper Mario (V, W, X), was on display, looking and playing similarly to the original, but with 3D backgrounds and some new gameplay elements. Starcraft 64 (2, 3) was on display for whatever reason. Excitebike 64 (Y, Z) made the show despite already being available in stores. The fluffy pink creature known as Kirby was there in Kirby 64 (1), mirroring the Japanese version we've already played. And then there was Eternal Darkness (4, 5), an action horror game with a beautiful resolution but extremely tedious framerate. Judging by Nintendo's line of games, it only makes us want Dolphin that much more.

Y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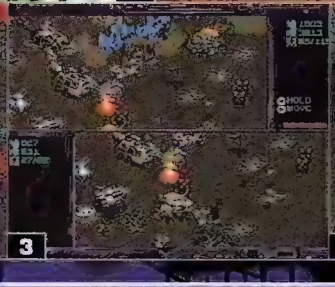
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rockstar

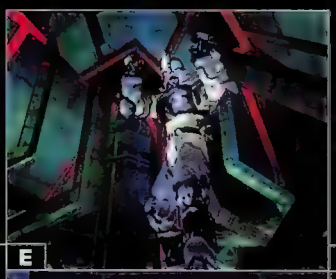
smugglers run

One of the highlights of the U.S. PlayStation 2 launch will be Angel Studios' Smugglers Run. This game truly re-defines the vehicular action/adventure genre. Geronimo!

INSERT KEYFRAME: SMUGGLERS RUN

01:45

As we pulled up to Rockstar our old friend Geronimo, designer extraordinaire, gave us the grand tour of his latest and greatest, Smugglers Run (A-D) for the PS2. A lot of developers are still figuring their way around the tricky PS2, but Angel Studios is good to go with a monster engine and perfect physics. In Smugglers Run, you can see 25 miles into the horizon... and then drive there! Everything the eye can see is there in real time. It's pretty intense. The action in the game revolves around rival gangs, drug smuggling, and everything that goes with it. This is chase or be chased gaming at its best. Oni (E) (see last month's GR) and Midnight Club (F, G) a new breed of big city racer, rounded out Rockstar's impressive PS2 lineup.



red storm

Roswell Conspiracies (H) for DC PS and N64 wraps 3D models in hand-drawn-looking textures and uses "cell shading" for an amzing effect. Also on DC, Bang! Gunship Elite (I), which looked promising, was the only 3D shooter present for the DC. Props. As for PlayStation, Rainbow Six Rogue Spear (J) looks to improve upon the already proven formula of the original (K).

01:50

ripcord

Ripcord is taking to the Dreamcast's online capabilities in a big way. Spec Ops: Omega Squad (O) delivers military FPS action, Gorkamorka (L) features online racing battles, Quest of the Blade Masters (M) is an RPG, and MOUT 2025 (N) features Military Operations in Urban Terrain. For the solo gamer, the RPG Legend of the Blade Masters is also coming.

southpeak

Visitors to Southpeak's booth were treated to autographs and photos with both the real Daisy Duke (Catherine Bach) as well as a look-alike. The company also unveiled Mia Hamm Soccer, the first-ever women's professional soccer title. Flintstones Bedrock Bowling (P, Q) for PS wasn't especially impressive, although it does introduce a new approach to the sport. Also available were the skiing game Big Mountain 2 (S,T) Fighter's Destiny 2 (U, V), and Rally Challenge 2K (R), all for N64.

snk

With nothing new for Neo Geo, SNK showed off a polished versions of Metal Slug X (W, X) and KOF 99 (Y, Z). Axing a bit of the arcade sprite madness in both games, for stable titles that play magnificently without the baggage of load time or slowdown, SNK preached quality, not quantity, for the hardcore enthusiasts.

sunsoft

Sunsoft only had a couple of titles on display, but at least one is an absolute must-have game: I'm of course talking about Blaster Master (1, 2) for PS. Just like in the original, the action takes place both on foot and in the moon bugg, though the game is now fully 3D. Also shown were the impressive new RPG Eternal Eyes, Clocktower 3 (adventure horror), T.R.A.G. Mission of Mercy and Shanghai True Valor (3, 4), all for PS.

sega

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Many would agree that Sega had the most impressive booth of the show. This was in no way the sign of a company on the ropes, and Sega didn't back down to the Sony titan, with spectacular stage shows taking up a significant portion of the West Hall. Between third-party titles and Sega's own phenomenal first-party hits, the Dreamcast showed that it's more than ready to go toe-to-toe with PS2 this fall.

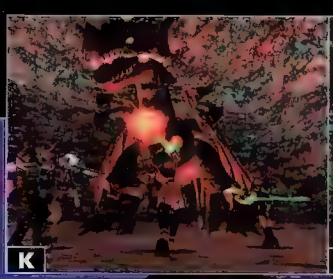
The highway sim 18-wheeler (A, D), where you control a big rig ala Harley Davidson Riders, was technically amazing, but probably won't find much of an audience outside of the arcade eccentric. Peter Molyneux's Black and White (B, C) received a lot of hype, and with good reason. The game looked amazing, and will certainly be a hit if it lives up to the promise of unparalleled control of a vast world where you play God, molding creatures of sophisticated AI into beings of self-sufficiency.

Sega also displayed D2 (G), Shenmue (F), and Seaman (E)—all titles anticipated long ago that, judging by the small crowds, now seemed to be losing steam because of the long translation periods. The serene Ecco the Dolphin (R,U,V), was shown in near-complete form. Full of gorgeous aquatic landscapes, miles of world exploration, and an undeniable sense of fantasy, Ecco's the one to watch for.

H

I

J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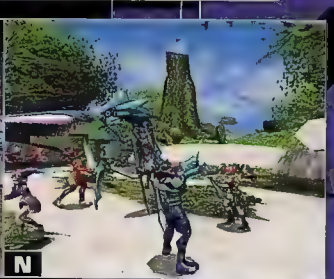
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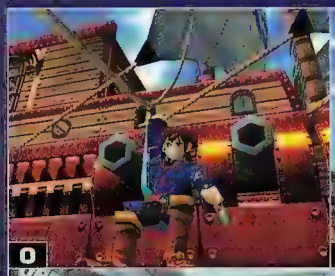
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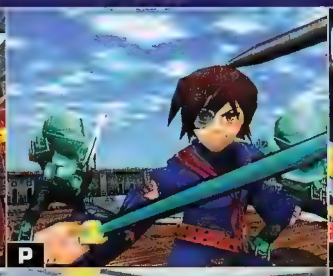
P

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V

01:75

Sega also brings heavy-hitters to the RPG lineup. Phantasy Star Online (K-N) got mixed reviews: being exclusively multiplayer and trading traditional RPG elements for Zelda-ish action evoked the biggest grumblings. Still, its anime-inspired models, lush hi-res environments, and promise of the best sci-fi story to hit the series, made complaints few and far between. Instead, traditionalists found a near-finished translation of Eternal Arcadia (O, P), an RPG competing with Final Fantasy in amazing cinematics, expressive characters, and, most of all, visual beauty.

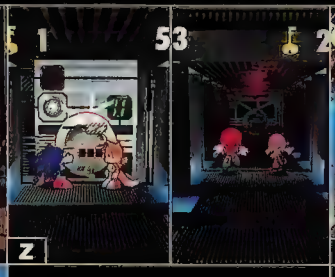
W

Samba de Amigo (Q) and Space Channel 5 (S, T) deserve to sell like Pokémon when they reach the States. And just wait till you see how amazing the new 3D/2D technology for Jet Grind Radio (H, I, J) looks in motion. Imagine the inspired levels and manic feel of Crazy Taxi, with Tony Hawk's air-tight control and you'll just hit the tip of what Sega's accomplished.

A smoother, domestic Sega GT was on the floor, but the scene stealer was the amazingly detailed Metropolis Street Racer (X, Y), which, at a glance, looks photo-realistic, and plays with tight, Euro controls to guarantee killer app status. Behind closed doors Sega showed Sonic 2, and to the public, the addictive party game Sonic Shuffle (Z, 1). But the real prize was the Internet-ready sports lineup of NFL2K1 (3) and NBA2K1 (2), demonstrated to run at 60 fps and online through the 56k modem. World Series Baseball 2K1 (4) looked as good if not better than Square's hyped PS2 baseball game, and Virtua Tennis (5) is the smoothest, most intuitive, most impressive tennis game I've ever played. Sega Sports should be the system's pride and joy.

X

Y



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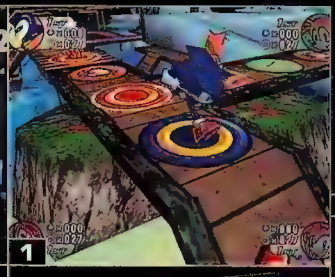
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sony

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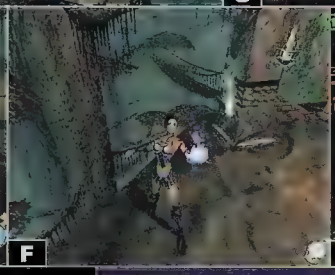
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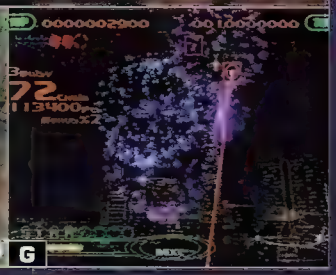
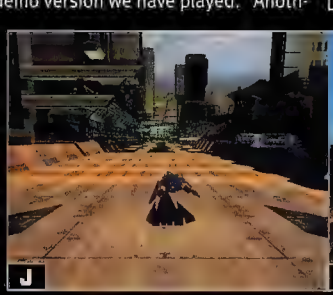

G

Sony may not have had the most cheerful exhibit at the show, but it nevertheless put out a bounty of good'uns. After announcing the fall launch date for the U.S. PS2, there were plenty of PS2 games to gawk at. The eagerly anticipated RPG Dark Cloud (A, B, C) was there, and moved at an unexpectedly smooth frame rate, though the combat system was a little tricky. Drakan (D, E, F) is being ported to the new system, and the demo shown looked impressive. Extermination, a South Pole adventure from the producer of Resident Evil, is an interesting title that can be described as "panic action." Fantavision (G) is coming to the States, looking as good as it can for what it is, a fireworks puzzle game. Fans of the original will no doubt be pleased to hear that Gran Turismo 2000 (H, I) is coming along swimmingly, looking a little further along than the demo version we have played. Another of Sony's trademark good-looking but unplayable titles was Wipeout Fusion (J, K, L). Sony also unveiled three titles only available for Europe: Drop Ship, Getaway (M, N, O), and Spin Sprint Car Racing. Two more early but cool PS2 games were Bungie's Oni, and ICO, a curious title with a girl wielding a 2x4, swinging on a chain, and attacking smoke monsters.

H

I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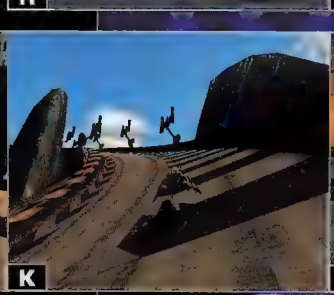
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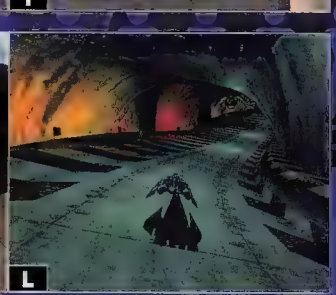
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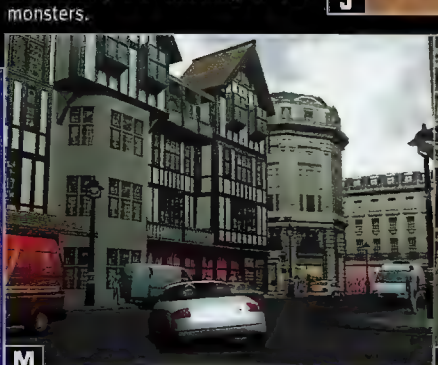
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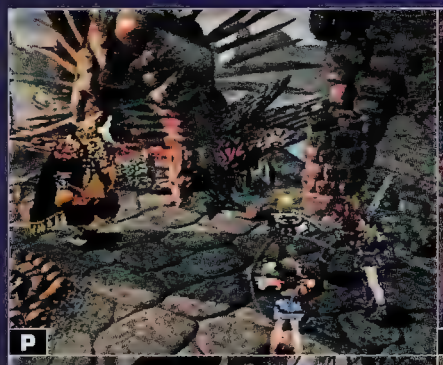
sony


P

Q

R

S

The lineup for the PlayStation was not as strong as its more powerful younger brother, but still had some good stuff. The biggest title was the Final Fantasy-challenger Legend of Dragoon (P). MediEvil 2 (R) and Wild Arms 2 (S) were on display as well. Spyro: Year of the Dragon (Q) will surely excite followers of Spyro, but looked to be essentially the same game as the first two. The party game scene is growing, as Sony's addition to the genre is Crash Bash (T, U, V). There were some Disney games to play based on their movies, namely Aladdin in Nasira's Revenge (W), and The Emperor's New Groove (X). It was inevitable that Who Wants to Be a Millionaire fever would catch onto consoles. And then there was the horde of sports titles on display: Cool Boarders 2001 (Y), Grind Session (Z), MLB 2001 (1), NBA ShootOut 2001 (2), NCAA Final Four 2001, NFL GameDay 2001 (4), NHL FaceOff 2001 (3), and NCAA Gamebreaker 2001. Sony didn't have all the bells and whistles of the Nintendo and Sega booths, but the fact that all the PS2s on display were American, it was enough to keep our attention focused.

T

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V

01:85 01:90

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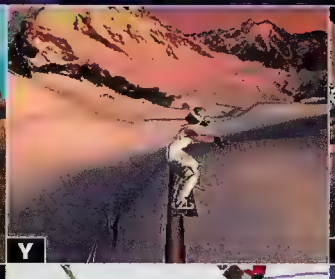
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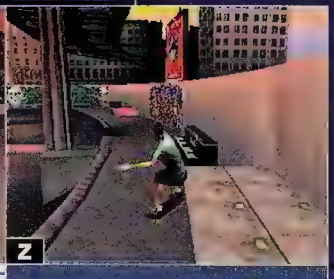
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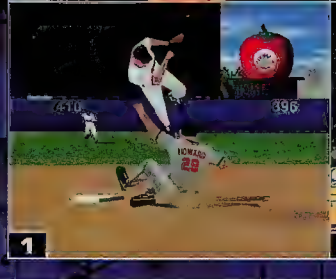
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square

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G

Square didn't make a very big impact this year, displaying RPGs that will be out shortly, like Legend of Mana (D), Threads of Fate, Chrono Cross (E), and Vagrant Story (C). Another disappointment was that the much-anticipated The Bouncer (F) only showed story sequences. Parasite Eve II (G) was looking good, and there were also bits and pieces of Final Fantasy IX (A, B) to see. Driving Emotion Type-S for PS2 made an appereance as well. In the company's little theater was being shown a ridiculously goofy live-action movie showcasing the upcoming Play Online network, in which three people from around the world collaborated in PS2's FF XI.

tecmo

01:95

Tecmo continued to capitalize on the success of Monster Rancher 2 (J, K—duh) by introducing Monster Rancher BattleCard for PlayStation and Game Boy Color, bringing the popular card battle craze from Japan to the States. Tecmo also showed off the beautiful version of Dead or Alive 2 (H, I) for PS2. Sadly, Ninja Gaiden for PS2 was nowhere to be seen. The pain runs deep.

H

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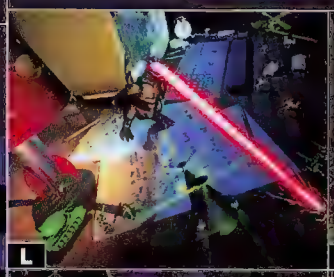
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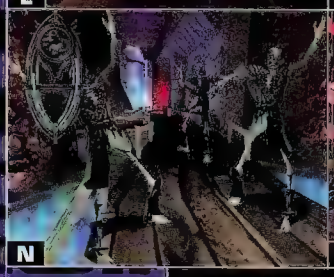
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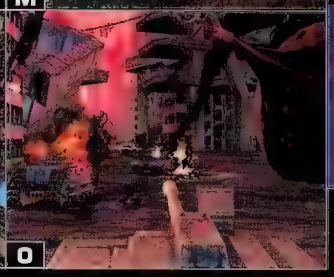
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Army Men, Army Men, Army Men. More resilient than roaches, the franchise keeps going with Air Attack 2 (L) on PS and PS2, Sarge's Heroes 2 on N64, PS and PS2, and Air Combat (M) on N64. Plus, Warriors of Might & Magic (N) comes to PS and PS2, as does a vehicular FPS, World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks (O).

thq

P

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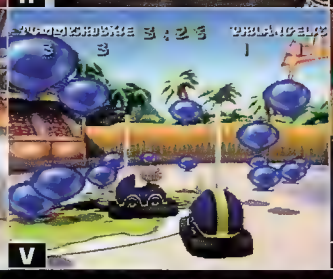
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Do you smell it? Do you smell what THQ's cookin'? It's one part wrestling, one part MTV sports and one part family action, topped off with some gritty action and role-playing. THQ's first WWF Dreamcast game will be WWF Royal Rumble (P), based on an upcoming coin-op from Sega and Yuke's that features up to nine characters onscreen at once. On PlayStation, WWF SmackDown! 2: Know Your Role expands on the gameplay from the original, while WWF No Mercy on N64 uses the tried and true Asmik/Ace engine but with new modes and characters like Rikishi and Chris Benoit. THQ also debuted their first PS2 game, the 3D action-RPG Summoner (Q, X), which shows a lot of promise with its detailed graphics. RPG-starved N64 owners will finally get an epic, too—Aidyn Chronicles: The Last Mage (R), which combines a 3D world with turn-based battles. If you like horror over fantasy, Evil Dead: Hail to the King (S) is coming to DC and PS this fall. Think Resident Evil, but with a shotgun, a chainsaw, and way more action. Danger Girl (T), based on the comic, was also on show, but it still needs work. Extreme sports fans will have plenty of choices with MTV Sports Ultimate BMX for PS, the PS snowboarding game MTV Sports Pure Ride, MTV Sports Skateboarding (U) on DC and PS, and Championship Motocross 2001 featuring Ricky Carmichael, a PS sequel that really didn't deserve to be made. Finally, for the family-oriented PS or N64 owner, THQ had Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue, Rugrats in Paris: The Movie (V), and the promising Scooby-Doo! Classic Creep Capers 9 (W), which packs four separate mysteries.

02:05

titus

Y

Z

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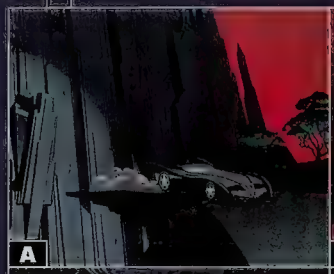
02:10

It's weird, it's fun, it's crude and amusing, it's Incredible Crisis (2) for PS. A collection of mini-games that parody movies and other games, Incredible Crisis was the highlight of Titus' show. Robocop sounds cool—it's not been announced for a particular system. Denis the Kangaroo (Z) was what it was: a kangaroo adventure game. Formula X (3) is a "work in progress," and Blues Brothers (Y) and Hercules (1) for N64 really need to progress.

ubi soft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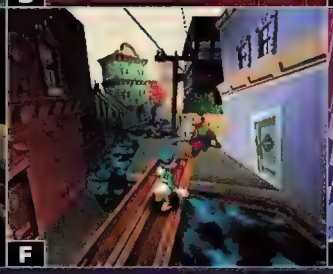
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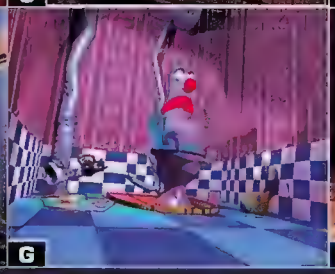
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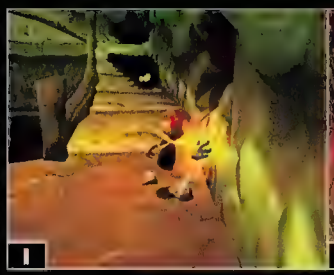
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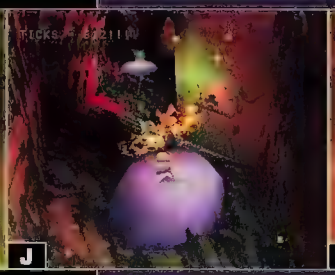
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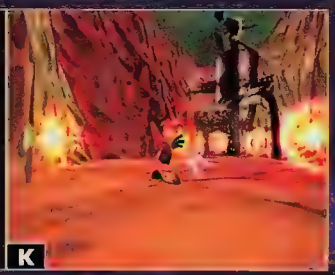
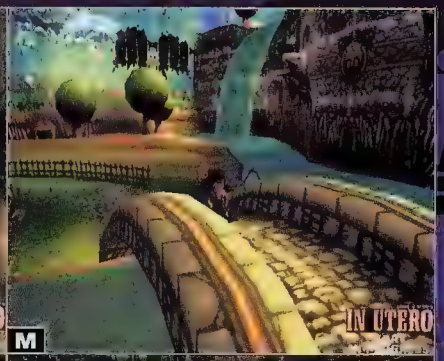

K

Never mind that Rayman 2 was shown on PlayStation. It's all about the limbless wonder leaping onto the PlayStation 2 in Rayman: PlayStation 2 Edition (I, J, K). While the game is yet to boast any technological leap over the Dreamcast Rayman 2, this redesigned version of Ubi Soft's masterpiece was still one of the most visually striking games on the show floor. The heart and soul of Rayman 2 are being strengthened with new levels, more nonlinear gameplay, and an increased enemy presence and resilience.

If anything can compete with Rayman, it's the marvelously imaginative Evil Twin (L-O), an action-adventure game from first-time developers In Utero. Inspired by modern comics and early black-and-white horror classics, Evil Twin was originally conceived as a cartoon and later transformed into a game. Owing its design to the Chucky doll in *Child's Play*, the central character explores a surreal dream world inhabited by a host of bizarre and delightfully creative monsters.

So good was Evil Twin that Ubi Soft can be forgiven for the VIP game and "Vallery's special wacky powers."

L



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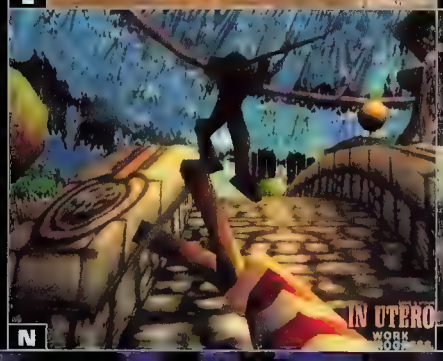

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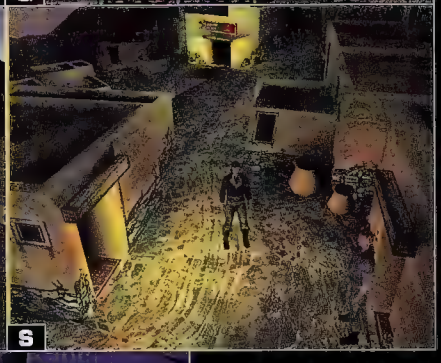
S

If you want to play something inspired, turn to Grandia II on DC, the sequel to the accomplished Saturn RPG, Grandia. Representing the dungeon RPG category was Evolution 2 (Z). Unfortunately, the anticipated Batman action-adventure game wasn't shown, but instead we got a look at the PS driving combat game, Batman Vehicle Adventure (A, B). Also borrowing their themes from the animated world were the bright and richly drawn Gold and Glory, The Road to El Dorado (C, D) for PS and DC; the PS dancing game Walt Disney's The Jungle Book: Rhythm 'N' Groove (X) (look for a PS2 and Dolphin version next year); the adventure game Dinosaur (Y); and the simplistic PS action-adventure game Donald Duck: Quack Attack (E, F).

Along with the whimsical DC point-and-click Stupid Invaders (G, H), based on the *Space Goofs* cartoon, Ubi Soft added to its staunch Dreamcast support with Arcatera (P, Q), a veritable adventure where you are given complete freedom to eat, sleep, explore and interact with characters that have a life of their own. Also for the Dreamcast was the enticing theme of Dragon Riders (R, S), an adventure-RPG where your friend and ally, a grand dragon, follows your advancement. The underrepresented strategy genre showed signs of increased life with Heroes of Might and Magic III (T), a prerendered, quest-based strategy game set in medieval times, and the modern-day military strategy game Peacemakers (U), which involves the media in its stream of conflict. Of course, the Dreamcast would not be complete without a racing game, and POD II (V) separated itself from the masses by setting its mutant vehicles racing against a backdrop of an impressive future world. Supporting the PS sports cause were AllStar Tennis 2000 (3), Surf Riders (2), and for all platforms, F1 Racing Championship (1).

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U

V

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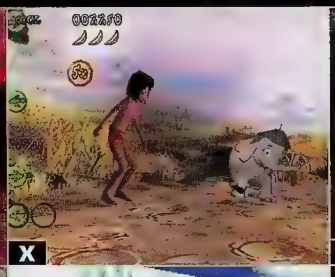
X

Y

Z

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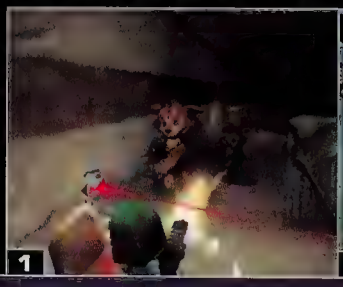
editors' top 10

dave halverson

While it's crystal clear that gaming is in yet another state of evolution, there were enough fresh, innovative titles at this year's E3 to get me through another 24 months. Mind you, the shows of today are nowhere near as exciting as the CES's of old when the SNES, Genesis, and TurboGrafx had it out, but they are much, much bigger and there now exists an unprecedented number of gaming genres. In fact, the whole experience of the big vid-game show has evolved now that gaming is a big business verging on Hollywood-sized receipts. Of the Big Three, Sega had by far the best representation with a quality title (and then some) in place for literally every genre. This was a great showing for Sega. If consumers aren't convinced now, well, then gaming has taken a turn for the worse. It was Nintendo, though, that emerged, in terms of pure video-game bliss, as the clear victor. Not only is this the year of the N64, but information I received behind the scenes of the Advance and Dolphin has me convinced that Nintendo is poised to dominate the gaming side of the industry for many years to come. As for the PS2, Konami's Kojima let us all in on what the machine can really do with MGS: Sons of Liberty, but otherwise, there wasn't much in terms of games to celebrate. The console is tricky, no doubt, but will certainly evolve as the PS did. Sony's bold broadband plans led me to believe that they are out to not only conquer gaming, but evolve home entertainment in the process. I remain an off-line gamer, though, until further notice. My top 10 represents playable titles. Metal Gear: SoL was game of the show, but it's over a year away, so I have to file it away in the recesses of my brain so that I don't go crazy. My God, man, it is breathtaking. We also peeked at Sonic Adventure 2, 7 Studios' Legion for PS2, and two games from Core Design I've sworn not to mention, which is hard, but a promise is a promise.

1. Conker's Bad Fur Day -N64
2. Evil Twin - DC
3. Time Splitters - PS2
4. Shenmue - DC
5. Paper Mario - N64
6. Dinosaur Planet - N64
7. Jet Grind Radio - DC
8. Indiana Jones - N64
9. Smugglers Run - PS2
10. Spawn - DC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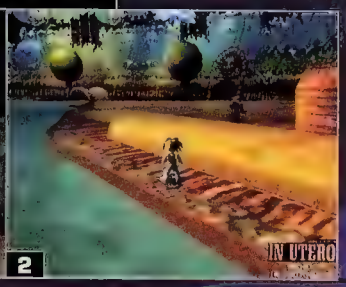

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brady fiechter

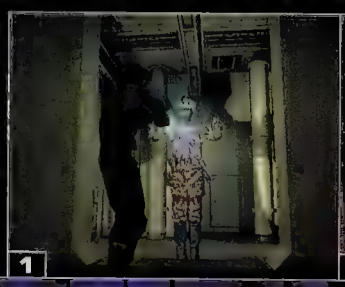
Someone once told me that E3 is as worthless as eating a moldy donut for the penicillin. Of course, he didn't know what he was talking about, because E3 is just the coolest trade show around. When you look past the alcohol poisoning, shameless sexual exploitations, dehydration, food depravation, physical exhaustion, deafening noise and incessant screaming, it's all about what you and I love: the games. Literally hundreds of games, most never before seen, all in one spectacular, electrically charged spot.

Pushing that charge to nuclear was Metal Gear Solid 2. Seeing it for the first time was the most emotionally resonating moment I've ever had in the presence of a video game. Some balked that it was only a video, cut together like a movie to artificially enhance the intensity of the moment. No way. This was high art, a game obviously crafted by a master of game design, a glimpse of the wonders to come.

If Metal Gear Solid lets me down in the end, there are more than enough other games, playable at the show, that will doubtlessly be some of the year's best: the rich imagination and supreme artistry of French-developed Evil Twin; the incomparable Nintendo universe building an adventure/RPG stage for Paper Mario; the beautifully designed Raziel exploring the compelling gloom and dread of Nosgoth in Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2. So what if the PlayStation 2 was a major disappointment, spreading a cloud of pessimism and doubt over showgoers. It's obvious that Sega and Nintendo will keep us happy until next year, when the PlayStation 2 beast will finally awaken from its post-Japanese-launch slumber and make the kind of noise we all have been anxious to hear.

Or maybe it'll keep on sleeping. If anything about E3 was disappointing, it was the dearth of playable, notably impressive PS 2 games. Until next year?

1. Metal Gear Solid 2 -PS2
2. Evil Twin - DC
3. Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2 - DC
4. Time Splitters - PS2
5. Paper Mario - N64
6. Grandia II - DC
7. Onimusha - PS2
8. Conker's Bad Fur Day - N64
9. Rayman PS2 Edition - PS2
10. Shenmue - DC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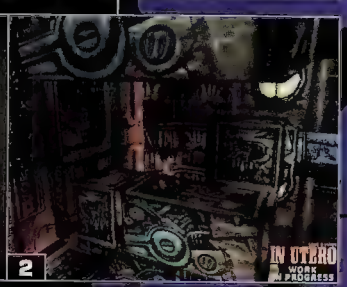

2

editors' top 10

mike hobbs

1. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
2. Mario Tennis – N64
3. Samba de Amigo – DC
4. Ferrari F355 – DC
5. Paper Mario – N64
6. Onimusha – DC
7. Evil Twin – DC
8. Zelda: Majora's Mask – N64
9. Dinosaur Planet – N64
10. Zone of the Enders – PS2

After the tepid Spring 2000 Tokyo Game Show, I was looking to this year's E3 to reaffirm my hopes for the PS2, and did I ever get it. Yes, everyone was stunned by Metal Gear Solid 2, and I almost wish I had something more off the beaten path and unpredictable to rant about, but nothing at the show, playable or not, came close to the emotional impact of Hideo Kojima's latest work in progress. It was just amazing, and the first real sign of the true depths of the PS2 hardware. We all knew, or at least hoped, that it was there, but this was the proof we've all been waiting for.

Nintendo's booth was my second most frequented spot, just because I had been dying to get my hands on Camelot's Mario Tennis, and I was not disappointed, as it was pure, unadulterated, Nintendo-style fun. And of course, it was great to see Paper Mario and the typically brilliant work of Rare in evidence in Banjo-Tooie, Dinosaur Planet, and Perfect Dark.

Sega put on a strong show with a huge number of games, but my favorites, like Jet Grind Radio, Phantasy Star Online, and Samba de Amigo, had already been shown at TGS. In that respect, the biggest treat was playing Yu Suzuki's F355 challenge on Dreamcast, and seeing the dubbed version of Shenmue.

It was a big and exciting show this year, but it was the non-interactive demo of Metal Gear Solid 2 that easily snagged my vote for game of the show.

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j.r. haugen

1. Dinosaur Planet – N64
2. Munch's Oddysee – PS2
3. Conker's Bad Fur Day – N64
4. Dark Cloud – PS2
5. Banjo-Tooie – N64
6. Zelda: Majora's Mask – N64
7. Mario Tennis – N64
8. Samba de Amigo – DC
9. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
10. Warcraft III – PC

To the most beautiful moment in life, better than a deed, better than a memory, the moment of anticipation! That is what E3 is all about. It is the video game New Years, throwing games in your face that you'll be drooling over for months to come. It is sure looking like 2000 will have the best holiday season yet, so start making you wish list now. Nintendo had almost too much good stuff to offer, with Conker, Dinosaur Planet, Banjo, Zelda, Paper Mario, and Mario Tennis coming later this year, not to mention Indiana Jones and Battle for Naboo. PlayStation 2 is set to hit on October 26, and is sure to have a healthy stock of games for Christmas, though it didn't seem like it, given the atmosphere of Sony's exhibit. On the other hand, Sega's presentation at the show blew me away, with its outrageous stage numbers and seductive Space Channel 5 balcony dances. And the Phantasy Star fanatic inside of me is finally getting the game I've been waiting for, though in an online format, so it's a bittersweet experience. I was also ecstatic to see Mega Man X5, and am wholly satisfied that there is still at least one old-school franchise out there that is staying true to its roots. Final Fantasy IX gave a similar feeling, but in a different way.

The video-game industry is so healthy right now, with huge games from all genres spread across several consoles. We've never had it so good.

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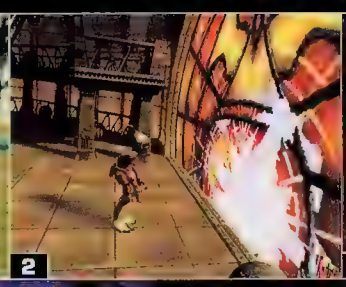
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editors' top10

mike puccini

What a killer E3 show! Having the Big Three competing for gaming dollars benefits us gamers. The PS2 was unveiled and showed its graphic prowess all over the convention center, even in Sony's cold and unfriendly booth, but nowhere better than Konami's booth with the glorious Metal Gear Solid 2.

Sega had the most outstanding booth at the show: their games were great, the booth was constantly buzzing with people, and stage shows were happening every half hour. I happened to be in the booth when Bay Area Invisibl Skratch Piklz member and Beastie Boy DJ Mix Master Mike tore the roof off the mother. Nintendo received second place in Booth of Show with some great N64 software—the brilliant Mario Tennis, Perfect Dark, Dinosaur Planet, Conker's Bad Fur Day, Paper Mario, Zelda: Majora's Mask—and, with an uncharacteristic alcoholic beverage bar in the Conker's Bad Fur Day area.

Other E3 stuff I must mention: Parasite Eve 2, KISS midgets, beautiful women everywhere, talking with Tony Hawk, Oni, Michael Jackson in not one but two video games, Sony's enormous party, The Simpsons Wrestling, Spy Hunter for PS2, Mega Man 64, NFL2K1, glorious Xbox demo, watching a five-minute clip of the Final Fantasy motion picture. It's gonna be a great year.

1. Metal Gear Solid 2 –PS2
2. Shenmue – DC
3. Mario Tennis – N64
4. T Hawk's Pro Skater 2 – DC
5. Onimusha – PS2
6. NFL2K1 – DC
7. Jet Grind Radio – DC
8. Conker's Bad Fur Day – N64
9. Spy Hunter – PS2
10. Simpsons Wrestling – PS

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chris hoffman

After all was said and done at this year's E3, the booth that impressed me the most had to be Nintendo's. From Dinosaur Planet to Majora's Mask to Banjo-Tooie to Paper Mario to Mario Tennis and more, Nintendo's games screamed of quality and fun, proving that it's really about the games, not the hardware. Sega, meanwhile, had a spectacular booth lined with innovative titles like Ecco, Space Channel 5 and Jet Grind Radio. Sony was a bit dull, though, despite the debut of the PS2 in the U.S. Not that PS2 games were bad, but the lineup was so quiet and predictable. Where was PS2 Crash? Actually, the single game that got me most excited was a PS2 game—Metal Gear Solid 2. The original was a nearly flawless game, and seeing the fantastic play strengthened with even better graphics and more elements is a dream come true. All of Konami's PS2 lineup was impressive, especially the only-on-video Shadow of Destiny, an atmospheric thriller that could redefine storytelling in games, and the Evangelion-esque Zone of the Enders. I was also thrilled to see that 2D is still alive and kicking. Konami is actually bringing out Gradius III & IV in the states, and Mega Man X5 is a welcome sight on PS. Another game not to be overlooked is Legend of Zelda: Mysterious Seeds of Power on Game Boy Color, which, despite being on a handheld system, was one of my top games of the show. There's good stuff coming all the way around.

1. Metal Gear Solid 2 –PS2
2. Shadow of Destiny – PS2
3. Dinosaur Planet – N64
4. Zelda: Seeds of Power – GBC
5. Zone of the Enders – PS2
6. Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete – PS
7. Zelda: Majora's Mask – N64
8. Tekken Tag Tournament – PS2
9. Mega Man X5 – PS
10. Marvel vs. Capcom 2 – DC

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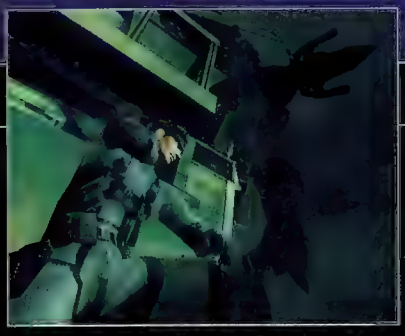
e3 awards



game of the show

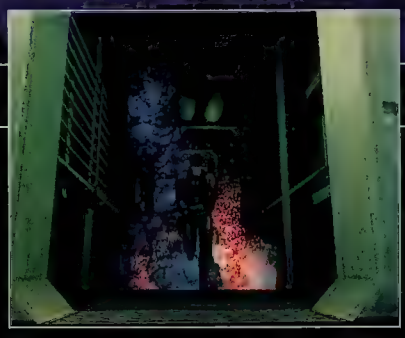
metal gear solid 2

00:00

best playstation title

Final Fantasy IX

00:00



best playstation 2 title

metal gear solid 2

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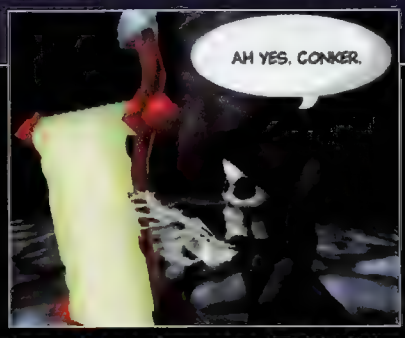

best nintendo 64 title

Conker's Bad Fur Day

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best dreamcast title

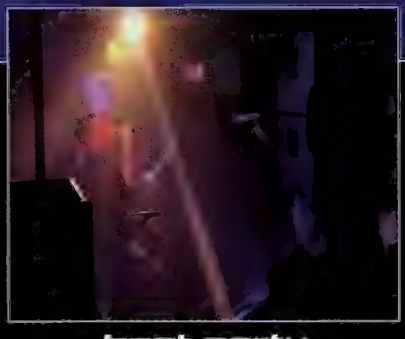
Shenmue

00:00

best handheld title

Zelda Seeds of Power

00:00



best party

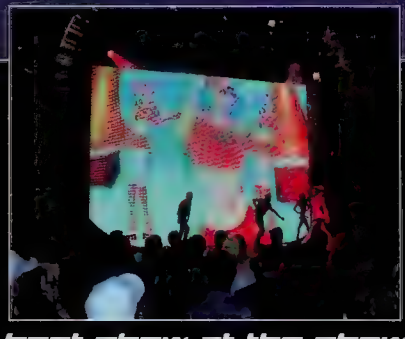
Sega featuring Filter

00:00

best booth

Sega 5 plus the grind

00:00



best show at the show

Space Channel 5

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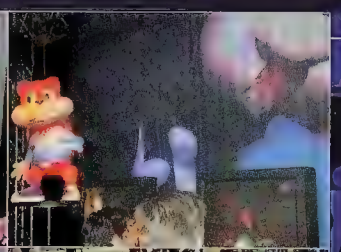
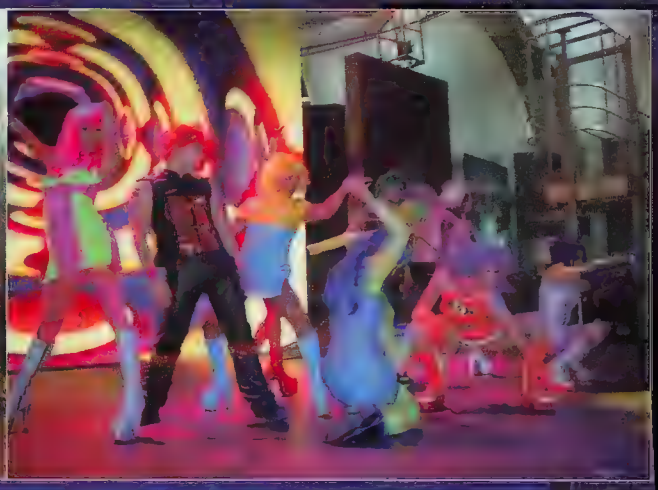
e3 mascots and booths

As usual, the gaming community spared no expense in bringing all comers another blitzkrieg of light, sound, action, and strangely unique humans. Gathering of Developers KISS'ed off the show floor for yet another off-site three-day party, Monster Rancher characters fought each other on demand, Mankind showed his kinder side, and Capcom let loose a wild man. Oh yeah—and Nintendo served beer.

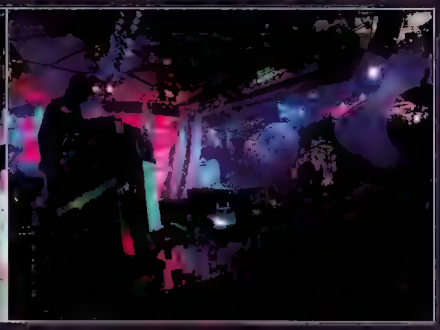


e3 shows at the show



And then there were the shows within the show. You could take in a live wrestling match, courtesy of Acclaim, when they weren't gettin' vert on their ramp over in the South Hall, or watch the Simpsons beat the ink off of each other. Sega had heat-stroke victims climb a wall for free stuff and Ulala packed 'em in a few times a day. Mix Master Mike was even on scene to scratch out the tunes.

e3 the parties



Ahh, the parties. Those of us smart enough to know better avoid these at all costs. Unfortunately, few of us know better. This year saw the first less-than-rowdy Sony bash due most likely to the laid-back stylings of Macy Gray and smoother, trippy grooves of Supreme Beings of Leisure. Nintendo did the Salsa thing, but had a classy spread, and Sega rocked the joint with Filter. Looking below, we find Tommy T. and Midway's A. Hoolan in Nintendo's house, J. Romero enjoying a night away from Daikatana, and assorted drunk people. Food folks and fun!

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vatical

Vatical had several companies in its booth, including the gaming legend Hudson Soft. Although the booth only had PS, N64 and GBC titles showing, I did unearth information that Hudson is currently working on Bomberman 2001 for the PS2. Two other Hudson PS2 efforts are a Bloody Roar sequel and a new franchise called Killer-B.

Some of the actual titles on display were Sea-Doo Hydrocross, Polaris Snocross (A), Bomberman 64: Second Attack (B) and a few GBC efforts, including AMF Extreme Bowling and an RPG called Towers.

A

B

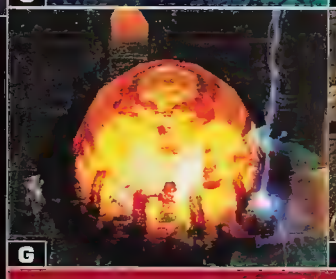
working designs

C

D

E

F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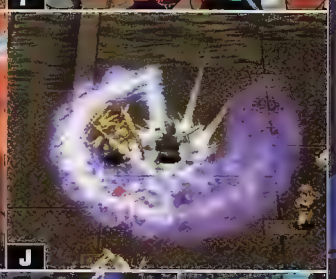
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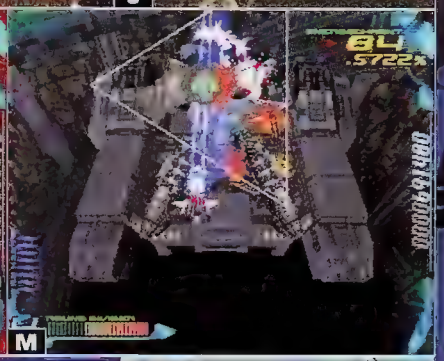
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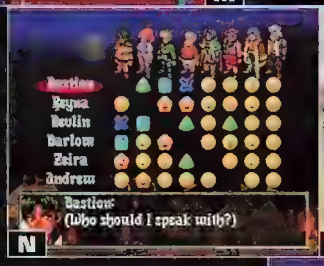
As usual, Working Designs proved itself to be the true messiah of hardcore gamers everywhere with its E3 showing. The magic and wonder of Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete (C-F) is coming along brilliantly, with WD's trademark excellent writing preserving the incredible story the game is known for. The same can be said for Arc The Lad Collection (G-J), which stands up phenomenally even though the earlier games in the series are a few years old. WD also announced their acquisition of the mad shooter Ray-Crisis (K-M), to be released under the Spaz label, and the delicious PC port of Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete may be the definitive version of the game. Also appearing was the recently released Vanguard Bandits (N, O).



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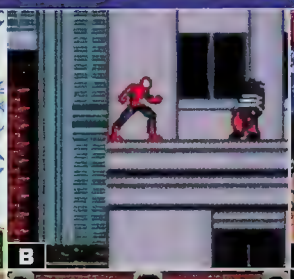
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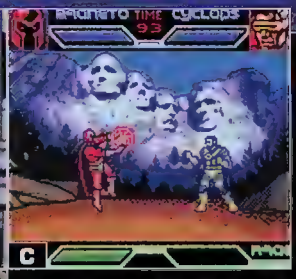

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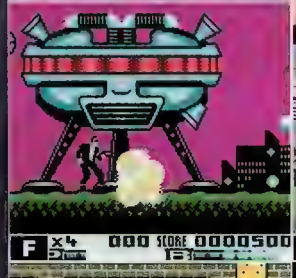

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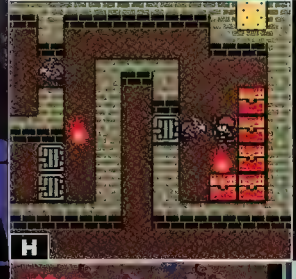
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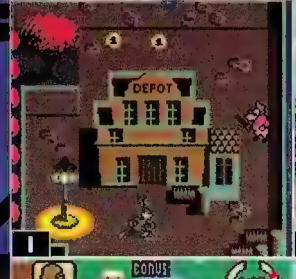

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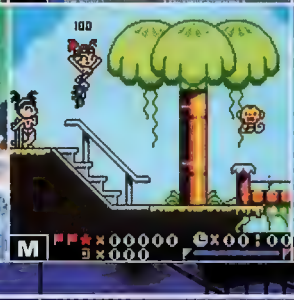

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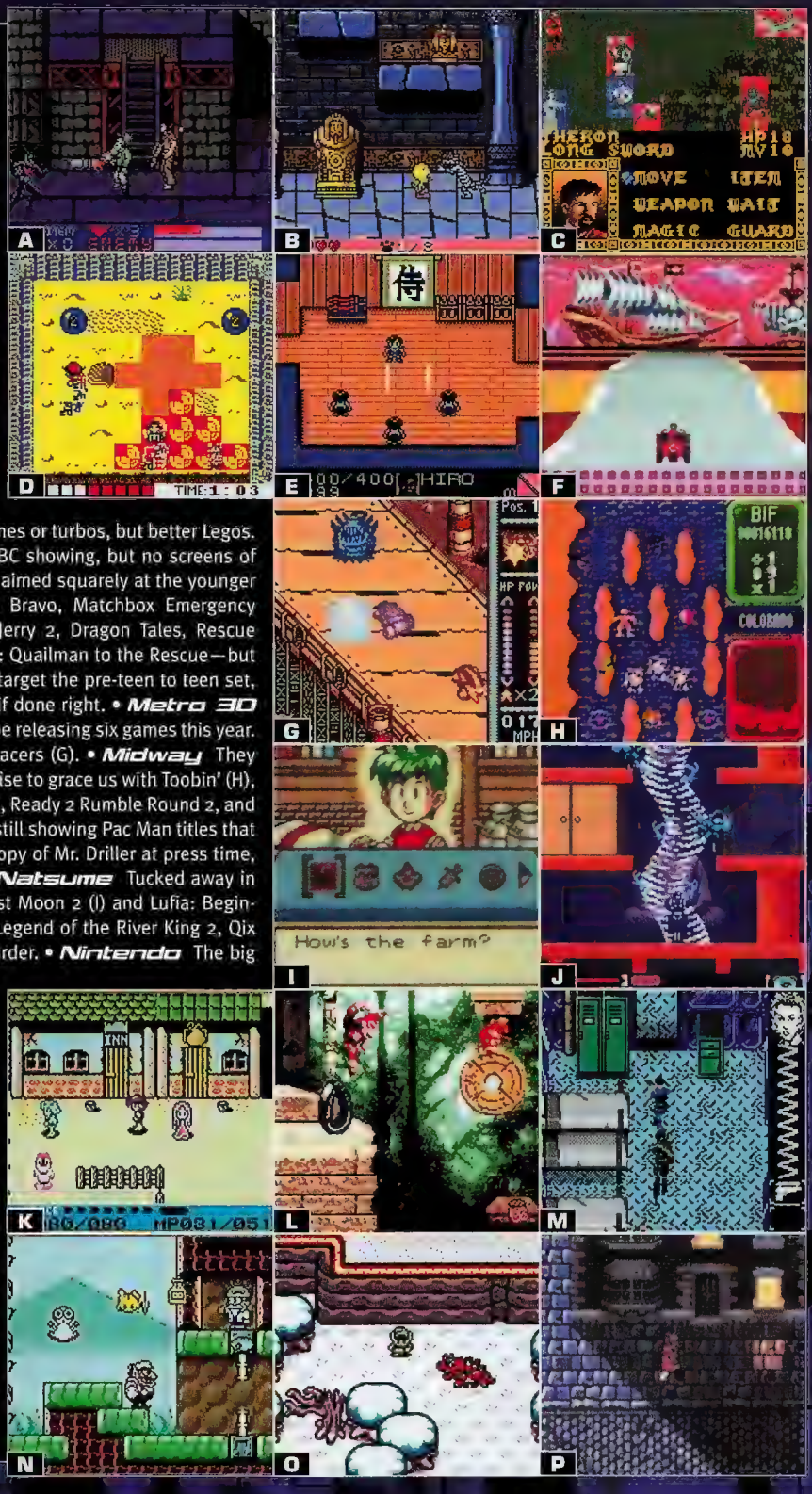
300 They didn't have a GBC in sight, but paid lip service to Army Men: Air Combat and Army Men 2 (A), Gobs of Games (a kid's style collection of tic-tac-toe and the like), and Heroes of Might and Magic. • ***Acclaim*** While their games list for 2000 is impressive—Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX, Fur Fighters, Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000, and South Park Rally—and hints of Mr. Domino, ShadowMan, and a new Turok game were being whispered, the only hands-on games were two Olsen twins titles: Get a Clue and The New Adventures of the Olsen Twins. Perhaps those games were only shown because the twins themselves made an appearance. Like those autographs, J.R.? • ***Activision*** Another company with no product on the floor, but they were running a videotape of Spider Man (B), X-Men: Mutant Academy (C), and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2, and promises of games like Blade (y'know, the Vampire Killer), Buzz Lightyear, Star Trek Invasion, and Tech Deck. • ***Bay Area Multimedia*** Mentioned in the E3 daily publications, this company has the rights for a Powerpuff Girls GBC game. • ***Capcom*** Hidden in their booth was Mega Man X, running alongside the PS version. Also coming soon is Metal Walker, but we also got the news that Resident Evil, which was shown at last year's E3, has been cancelled. Assumedly the GBC Dino Crisis has also been cut. • ***Codemasters*** The Brits who brought us Colin McRae Rally on the PS are set to release the Army Men-ish Cannon Fodder (D) and Pro Pool (E), perhaps the best handheld pool simulation. • ***Crave*** It's Men in Black 2 (F)...what more can we say? • ***Electronic Arts*** They had one of the more overwhelming booths at E3, what with all their PS2 sports titles, and apparently had no room for the handheld titles. Still, look for WCW Mayhem (G) soon, and The World is Not Enough later this year. • ***Electrosource*** While they aren't a publisher per se, they've managed to secure exclusive distribution rights that make them seem like it, and for the GBC, this list includes Bugs Bunny's Crazy Castle 4, Flintstones: Burgertime in Bedrock (yes, Burgertime), Magical Drop, and Microsoft's Entertainment Pack and Puzzle Pack. • ***Enix:*** Having set up an office in Seattle, they are now busy localizing many of their great Japanese RPGs, including Dragon Warrior 1 & 2 (H), both of which fit on one GB cart! • ***Infogrames*** The company that seems bent on buying up developers had a pretty good showing of playable handheld titles, including Looney Tunes Collector: Alert! (I), Harley Davidson Race Across America, Test Drive Le Mans (J) and TD Cycles (K), Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter, Wacky Races (L), and our editor's current handheld favorite, Xtreme Sports(M). Also worth mentioning, although it's too early for a playable or even screen shots, is a GBC adaptation of Alone in the Dark. • ***Interplay*** Still on the to-be-released list are Casper the Friendly Ghost, Pocket Racers, and Wicked Surfing (N), and word has it that they'll be publishing the Galaga-type shooter Section 7 (O) as well.

handhelds

Kemco They had plenty of playables on the floor, and plenty of floorspace on which to play them. Batman Beyond: Revenge of the Joker (A) and Tweety's High Flying Adventure (B) seem to be usual licensed fare, while Runelords (C) is an RPG based on David Farland's fantasy books, and Territories (D) is a basic puzzler. The game our handheld editor is awaiting, however, is the GBC version of Daikatana (E). • ***Konami*** The Metal Gear Solid 2 presentation for PS2, plus the release of Metal Gear Solid for GBC the day before the show (see page 106), helps us forgive Konami for having no playables, no screenshots, and no art for any of their handheld games. They do have titles, though: The Grinch, Monster Force, The Mummy, and Woody Woodpecker Racing. • ***Lego:*** Coming to GBC and PC are Lego's Action Team, a kid-oriented spy title, and Lego Racers (F), a racer in which you upgrade your car not with bigger engines or turbos, but better Legos. • ***Mattel*** Another company with a strong GBC showing, but no screens of them (go figure). Granted, most of the titles are aimed squarely at the younger set—Tyco R/C Racin' Ratz, Matchbox Mission Bravo, Matchbox Emergency Patrol, the Wild Thornberrys Rambler, Tom & Jerry 2, Dragon Tales, Rescue Heroes Fire Frenzy, Doug's First Game and Doug: Quailman to the Rescue—but there's a Max Steel game in the works that will target the pre-teen to teen set, and could cross into the "real game" category, if done right. • ***Metro 3D*** We entered the show believing Metro 3D would be releasing six games this year. We left knowing there is only one: Armada FX Racers (G). • ***Midway*** They weren't showing any titles at the show, but promise to grace us with Toobin' (H), Cruis'n Exotica, Gauntlet Legends, NFL Blitz 2001, Ready 2 Rumble Round 2, and San Francisco Rush 2049. • ***Namco*** They're still showing Pac Man titles that came out last year, but we did get an advance copy of Mr. Driller at press time, and it's just like the PS version, just smaller. • ***Natsume*** Tucked away in Crave's booth, Natsume was showing off Harvest Moon 2 (I) and Lufia: Beginning of a Legend, and had info on hand about Legend of the River King 2, Qix Adventure, Return of the Ninja (J), and Trick Boarder. • ***Nintendo*** The big news, of course, was no news: not a speck of information about Game Boy Advance. Instead, said Nintendo, look at all our great games for 2000: Alice in Wonderland, Crystalis (K), Donkey Kong Country (L), Little Mermaid 2, Perfect Dark (M), Pocket Soccer (previously known as 5 A Side), Pokémon Gold and Silver, Pokémon Puzzle League, Wario Land 3 (N), Warlocked, and the Legend of Zelda: Triforce Series, starting with the Mystical Seeds of Power (O), which should (cross your fingers) be out by year's end, with the other two titles to follow. • ***Red Storm*** After getting Rainbow Six onto every platform possible, they're aiming for a similar treatment with their new action/adventure title Roswell Conspiracies: Aliens, Myths, and Legends (P). With the obvious X-Files themes, plus a Roswell Conspiracies animated show launching this fall, we're hopeful their work pays off.



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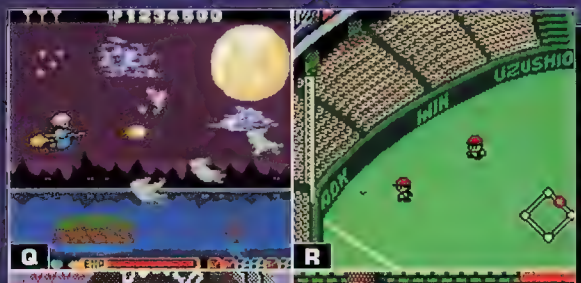
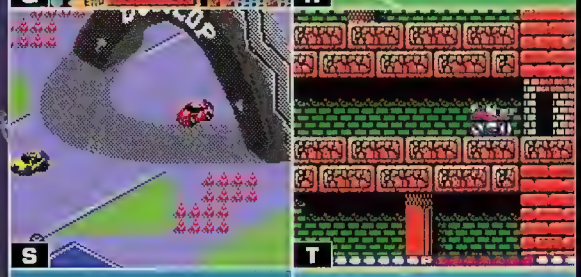
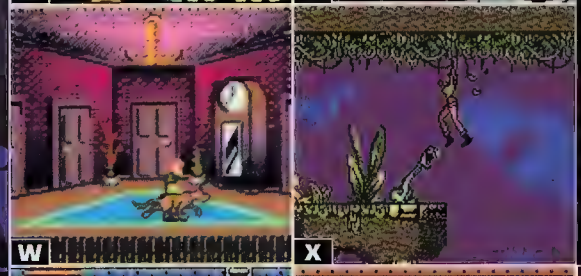
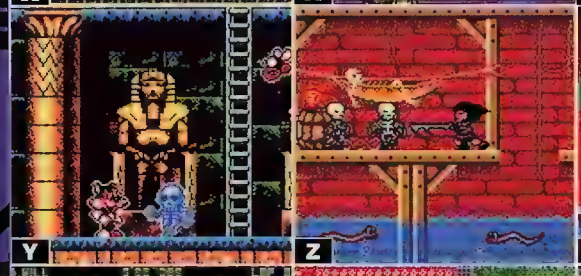
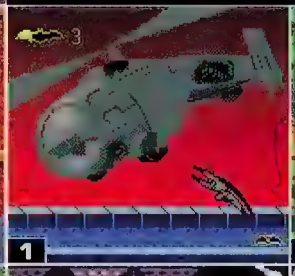
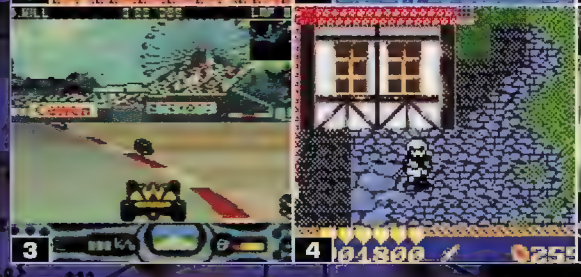












Rockstar No word on their upcoming Austin Powers game for GBC. But they had a keen "for guests only" lounge area, which only a few of us managed to sneak into. • ***Simon & Schuster*** M&Ms have gone from animated celebrities to now starring in their own games: a 3D platformer on the PC, and a 2D platformer on the GBC. • ***SMG*** Newcomers Stealth Media Group are bolstering their library of game soundtracks with a new crop of games, mostly for the PC, but including Tyrian 2000, a Xevious-style game for the GBC. • ***SNK*** They were heavily touting their upcoming MP3 playing cartridge, which will hold 30 minutes of tunes and run us about $70, but also on hand were Cool Boarders Pocket, Cool Cool Toon (a Bemani-type hip hop adventure game), Cotton (Q), Dynamite Slugger (R), Evolution, and US Wrestling. No sign of Magician Lord, though. • ***South Peak*** A pre-alpha of Dukes of Hazzard for GBC was ready just in time for E3, and it easily plays as well as the PS version (hee hee). Also there for hands on testing was TOCA Touring Car Championship (S). • ***Sunsoft*** Blaster Master (T) was supposed to ship before the show, but has slipped to the fall. It sure looked done at the show, though. Alongside that was Moomin's Tale, a youngsters' platformer. • ***Take 2*** Their press materials only spoke of Lemmings and Oh No! More Lemmings, with no official word on a handheld release of Jazz Jackrabbit, KISS: Psycho Circus, or Silver Streak Pinball. Go figure. • ***THQ*** Many of the Eidos handheld titles took a walk to THQ immediately prior to the show, and then THQ hid them away in an upstairs room. We got our hands on Aliens: Thanatos Encounter, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Croc (U), Micro Machines V3, MTV Sports BMX and Skateboarding, NASCAR 2000, NBA Live, Power Rangers: Lightspeed Rescue, Championship Motorcross 2001 (V), Rugrats in Paris, Scooby Doo (W), and Tomb Raider (X). No code was ready for The Simpsons: Treehouse of Horrors, but we'll be looking for that one too! • ***Titus*** Behind a wall of security, Titus is making ready Titus the Fox (Y), Hercules: The Legendary Journeys, and Xena: Warrior Princess (Z), and they're all looking pretty good. A handheld version of Blues Bros. 2000 has dropped below the radar, but we're ready to pick it up when it resurfaces. • ***Ubi Soft*** Welcome to the licensing parade: Aladdin, Animorphs, Batman Adventure (1), Dinosaur, Donald Duck: Quack Attack, Inspector Gadget, Jungle Book (2), Toonsylvania, and—get this—V.I.P. We're on the edge of our seats for that one. Rounding out the 2000 releases are F-1 World Grand Prix (3) and Hype the Time Quest (4). • ***Vatical*** Their release list seems to have something for everyone, from AMF Bowling (5) and Jimmy White's Cue Ball (6) to Bomberman Challenge and VR Powerboat, Towers: Lord Baniff's Revenge to Deer Hunter.

SEAMAN

living large in your TV

BY TATSUKI MIURA

Seaman is coming to the States. We honestly didn't think it would happen, but in today's gaming climate, anything is possible. We took the opportunity to ask a few questions with the game's creator, Yuke Saito, at the Sega booth. He had some words of caution for Sega of America, and a glimpse at the next version of Seaman.

GR: What was the inspiration for Seaman's interesting and emotive face?

YS: We designed it to resemble the typical Japanese actor that you can find in Hollywood movies, and we wanted realistic expressions so that you can see what he is thinking. Did you see the Michael Crichton/Philip Kaufman movie *Rising Sun*, or Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*? OK, you can see a lot of Japanese actors there, and they look really weird, you know? I wanted to have that kind of face.

GR: Were there some phrases from the original Japanese version of Seaman which did not translate into English?

YS: In the Japanese version, we did not have a lot of these phrases. Seaman speaks very rudely, though he doesn't use any bad words or forbidden words.

GR: Is there room for such a unique game in the American market?

YS: Well, Sega of America thinks that they are doing great in this industry right now, because the Dreamcast is doing much better in the States than in Japan, but this is very dangerous. The industry itself is coming to a turning point. Unlike the computer industry and other industries like movies and music, the Japanese game industry is a little bit ahead of the curve, and a good barometer for what is to come. And what we have been seeing is that conventional games don't sell anymore, and everyone from popular companies like Square, Hudson, Koei, Capcom and those guys are really looking for new ideas and new genres. I know this because so many times I get calls from them and they are looking for new video-game titles and ideas, and they say, "Can you do that for us?" and I say, "No, I cannot work with anyone other than Sega now, because I'm really focusing on Dreamcast right now." One thing I am sure of is that they are really having problems finding new ideas. With a title like Seaman, there is little risk, because of the low cost, but the problem comes in marketing the game before the release, and we literally had to create the market itself in Japan. We had to let the people know exactly what it was, like Sony did with the Aibo robot dog. Here in the States, everybody thinks that the Dreamcast is doing very well, so rather than taking risks by creating new markets, they are concentrating on conventional genres like RPGs and sports games, and they are going to have a problem within a year or two. What Sega of America needs to do is to take risks to create new markets before the PS2 is released. Hopefully, Seaman will help to bring something unique.

GR: What of the rumor of the so-called Birdman sequel?

YS: One thing I can say right now is that a sequel to Seaman is going to be an online version, a network version. That's the only thing I can say right now. We still have another maybe six months to one year of research and development, so it's hard to reveal right now exactly what the sequel will be like. **GR**

NINTENDO BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY MICHAEL PUCCINI

Nintendo's next-generation system, codenamed Dolphin, will be unveiled in Japan at Space World this August. As it turned out, at this year's E3, they didn't even need it. Nintendo truly had one of their best lineups ever this year, due in no small part to one ornery vermin, and they are having a banner year. Here's what George Harrison, Nintendo's vice president of marketing and corporate communications, had to say:

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: HOW IS THE SHOW GOING FOR NINTENDO?
George Harrison: Actually it's going very well. N64 and Game Boy have been very well received. And we've got a great product lineup. Our message of keep your focus on existing platforms wouldn't work if we didn't have a great lineup of games for both Game Boy and N64.

GR: HOW DO YOU FEEL THE INDUSTRY IS STARTING TO PLAY OUT? OBVIOUSLY, IT'S A KNOWN FACT THAT COMPETITION IS HEALTHY, BUT WITH SEGA BACK IN FULL FORCE AND, OF COURSE, SONY AND NOW MICROSOFT, HOW DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY IS PLAYING OUT?
GH: I think it's an exciting time anytime there's more innovation and creativity – you're going to see the level of gameplay improve, new ideas come up. While everyone's so focused on graphics and improved technology, little things like Pokémon sneak in there and there's some little inherent aspect of the gameplay that becomes the dominant force. So I think it's going to be an exciting time for the industry, a very competitive time for development talent. There's probably not enough developer resources to go around, and so a platform will have to establish its reputation pretty quickly to be able to sustain developer interest.

GR: I KNOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE WITH THE SUPER NES, GOING FROM SUPER NES TO N64, BUT WITH E3 BEING E3 AND NINTENDO NOT HAVING THEIR NEXT-GENERATION SYSTEM HERE AND SEGA AND SONY HAVING THEIRS HERE, DO YOU THINK THAT IT HURT YOU GUYS NOT TO HAVE ANY PRESENCE?
GH: I don't think so. It really comes down to a business strategy. We weren't really prepared to show a lot anyway on Game Boy Advance and Dolphin. I think we can get a bigger lift in terms of its unveiling at the trade show in Tokyo in August. So we're excited, and it sets us up for next year, for a really big unveiling of Dolphin.

GR: ARE THERE GOING TO BE ANY NEW SURPRISES? HAVE WE SEEN NINTENDO'S FULL 2000 LINEUP HERE OR ARE THERE GAMES IN DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL COME OUT?
GH: I don't think that there are really any other games in development that are likely to make it for this year. And we tend to focus on the big titles, like Zelda and Conker's Bad Fur Day, but there's also a lot of other great product that didn't get quite as much coverage – things like Mario Tennis from the makers of Mario Golf, and things like ExciteBike 64, which we just launched. So there's a great breadth and depth of what we have to offer on N64 this year.

GR: CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE SILICON KNIGHTS DEAL?
GH: We haven't been able to expose any of the financial aspects of it, but they're a company who's known for making PC games for young adults. They're also known for their really beautiful graphic presentations, so I think we're going to see some really high-quality worlds that they've created – Eternal Darkness being the first. And the other thing that we've announced is that they are in fact already working on Dolphin product, so we're very excited about that.

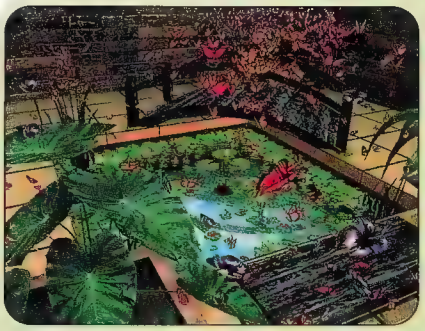
GR: HAVE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO WALK THE SHOW FLOOR? IF SO, WHAT HAS IMPRESSED YOU THE MOST OTHER THAN NINTENDO'S PRODUCTS?
GH: I looked at the PlayStation 2 games and there were a couple from EA that I thought really looked outstanding. The balance of the lineup, I thought, were not the quantum leap I would have expected with that kind of improvement in technology. So there's maybe an indication that they're still trying to figure out how to work the machine. But other than that, I didn't get over to the other hall, so I feel like I kind of missed part of the show.

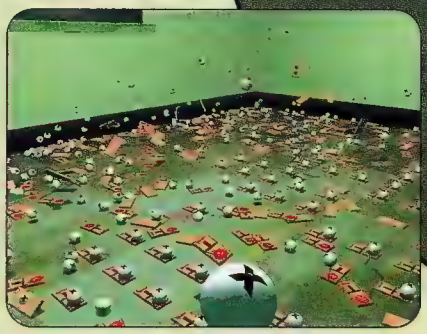
CONTINUED ON PAGE 139 ▸

MICROSOFT
houston, we have a console

BY MICHAEL PUCCINI

Microsoft's E3 presence was low-profile but effective. Showgoers herded around the X-laden display for a chance to view the future according to Microsoft visionaries. Complimenting the video was an environmental audio program, called Direct Music, that composes on the fly. After the presentation, I sat down with Kevin Bachus, Microsoft's director of third-party relations for the Xbox, to ask him about Microsoft's strategy.





GAMERS' REPUBLIC: TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT XBOX AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH IT.

Kevin Bachus: I'm director of third-party relations. I'm responsible for working with publishers who are supporting the box. I've been at Microsoft for about three years. Before this I was group product manager for Direct X (a division of Microsoft responsible for gaming APIs). A few of us started the Xbox project about a year and a half ago and went to Bill and asked for a bunch of cash. And to our surprise, he said, "Sure." And so here we are.

GR: WHEN ONE THINKS OF A MICROSOFT-DEVELOPED GAME, THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND ARE THE FLIGHT SIMULATORS. SO ARE YOU GOING TO HAVE AN IN-HOUSE DEVELOPMENT GROUP WORKING ON TITLES?

KB: Absolutely. We've got a strong first-party team. With Xbox, their challenge is trying to build an equally strong, if not stronger, console development focus in addition to the PC games they're developing. If you go down and look at our booth, you'll see that we're big, big fans of the PC and we're going to continue to support the PC with the best games that we can. But in addition to that, now we add a commitment to Xbox and to console games. The kinds of games you'll see come out of that group are games appropriate for consoles.

GR: WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY GOING FROM MICROSOFT'S PERSPECTIVE COMING INTO IT AND AIMING TO MOVE IT FORWARD?

KB: From a technical perspective, I think that the big milestones are pretty well defined. Graphics are going to continue to develop in a way that provides artists and programmers a lot more tools, a lot more flexibility, a lot more performance. So the graphics you see are a lot more photo-realistic. One of the things that we believe with Xbox is that audio has typically been an area where console developers have underinvested in. And as the graphics become more and more realistic, if the audio doesn't keep pace it becomes more noticeable. So we think that audio is an area of great differentiation. We think that having a large amount of persistent storage, like a hard drive, is an absolute must-have over time. This thing's capable of rendering huge amounts of data, very complex models, and very detailed textures. So you need somewhere to store that that's faster than a DVD but larger than the amount of RAM that you have in these other machines. So we think that a hard drive makes a lot of sense and particularly makes sense in an online scenario where you want to download new levels or tracks or characters or weapons or whatever. We think that online is going to continue to become more important and our take on online is that it's only really valuable insofar as it enhances the gaming experience. We're not really interested in general web browsing or home automation or things like that. We're interested in adding to the gaming experience—make the game live on longer or to give you a new experience or to enhance the enjoyment of the game overall.

GR: QUITE HONESTLY, I WAS EXPECTING A LARGER PRESENCE AT THIS SHOW FROM MICROSOFT.

KB: There's sort of a natural cycle that you go through when you introduce a product. It was important for us to get out there 18 months ahead and tell developers what we were doing and to do it in a public way so there wasn't any sort of cloak-and-dagger about it. Put Bill onstage (at GDC) so that they knew we had the commitment of the company behind the project.

GR: AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, SONY ANNOUNCED THEIR HARD DRIVE FOR PS2. DO YOU THINK THAT IF MICROSOFT WASN'T IN THE INDUSTRY THAT THEY WOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT?

KB: I can't speculate. I'm sure they've been thinking for some time about persistent storage. It's sort of a natural evolution. It certainly does validate our position that it's going to be an important part of the gaming experience of the future. I think that one of the challenges we had in designing the Xbox was that...we looked at the history of the

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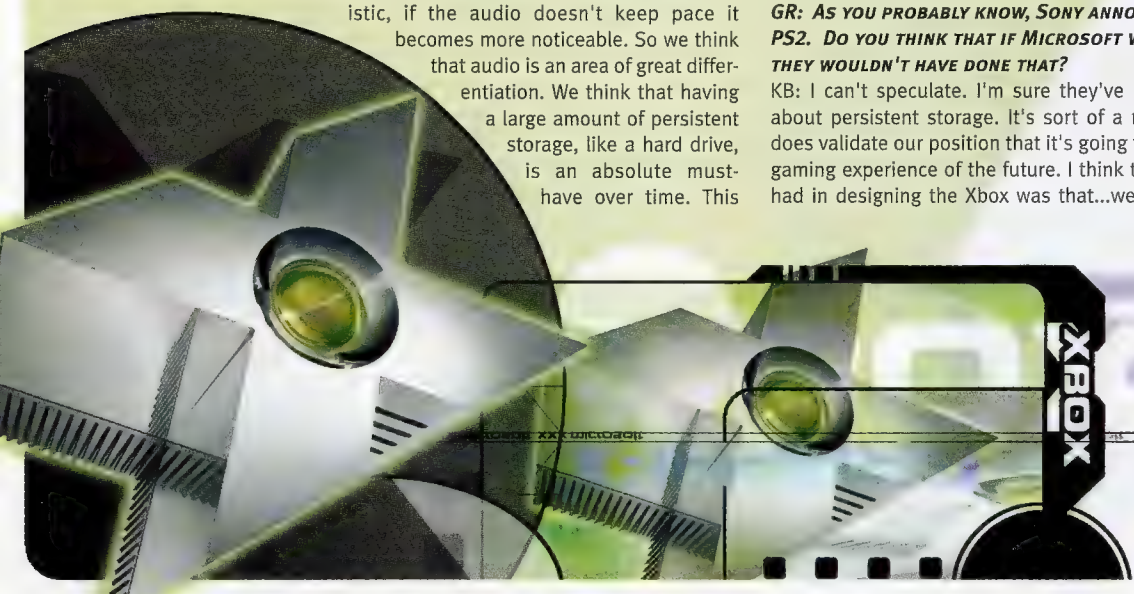
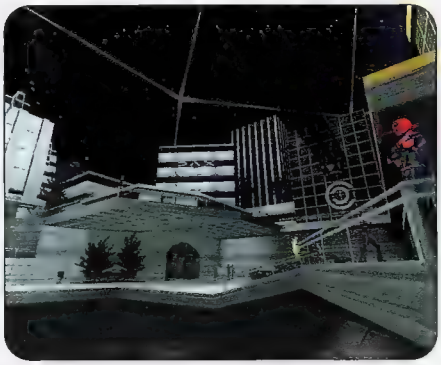
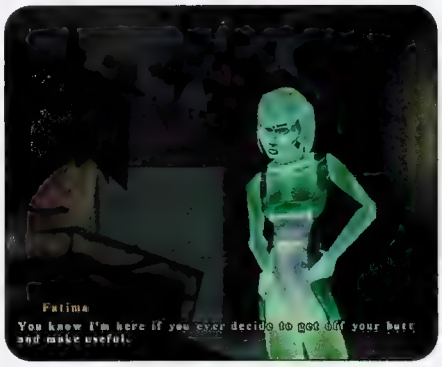


We were so impressed by Ion Storm's Anachronox that we cornered one of the developer's representatives, production coordinator Andrew Thomas, at Eidos' E3 booth, to find out a little bit more about the transition from PC to Dreamcast.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: WHAT OTHER CONSOLES BESIDE DREAMCAST, IS ANACHRONOX PLANNED FOR?
Andrew Thomas: The only system confirmed so far is Dreamcast.

GR: WILL IT LOSE ANYTHING IN THE PORT-OVER?
AT: It shouldn't. It's a massive game, but the Dreamcast has the capabilities to do everything. We haven't really addressed that issue yet. We're finishing off the PC product first, and then we'll start porting to Dreamcast. So I really can't answer how that's going yet because we haven't even started.





GR: HOW DO YOU LIKE WORKING WITH THE DREAMCAST?
AT: It's awesome. I'm not an actual programmer, I'm just a producer, but I think it's a great system and I think it's got a lot to offer.

GR: HOW DO YOU THINK THE PC MARKET IS GOING TO FARE IN THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS? DO YOU THINK THAT THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THOSE DIE HARD PC PLAYERS SINCE PEOPLE WHO MAKE GAMES ACTUALLY MAKE THEM ON PCS?
AT: I think that there will always be PC games. I think that, yes, they're a pain to develop for because they're obviously a lot more erratic than the console systems. However, they're a lot more versatile than the console systems too. And you can get your hands on the latest technology right away, the fastest chips right away, so I think that people are always going to be developing games for the PC. And I think that we will eventually see an emergence of a more PC-centric industry. I mean, right now we're shifting over to consoles, but everything fluctuates, and I think that we'll come back to the PC.

GR: SO DO YOU THINK THAT THE MORE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES GO TO PC FIRST, LIKE TOP-OF-THE-LINE GRAPHICS CHIPS AND SUCH?
AT: Absolutely. Y'know, the advanced stuff happens on the PC first and then, of course, someone comes up with a really great console system that takes advantage of all the latest technologies that have been tested in the PC arenas. So you could say that the PC is almost like the testing ground for all the technologies that the consoles end up using. I mean, if you look at the XBox with the hard drive that it's shipping with, the console is essentially shipping as this hybrid PC/console thing.

GR: SWITCHING BACK TO THE GAME, HOW'D YOU COME UP WITH THE NAME ANACHRONOX?
AT: That's a great question. Anachronox is a two-part word: anachronism, meaning something out of place out of the past, and then nox, which means poisonous. So basically, it means poison from the past. And that actually factors into the story threefold, because each character has a conflict that they have to resolve by the end of the game that's out of their past—some poison out of their past—and then, of course, there are problems with the universe, and you have to save the universe and you find out that that's related to a poison out of the past as well.

GR: WHAT TYPE OF AUDIENCE ARE YOU GOING AFTER WITH ANACHRONOX?
AT: The actual audience that we're targeting with this game is the exact same audience that plays your Squaresoft role-playing games. This is very much like a Squaresoft title only on a PC, and we've tried to address all of the issues that most standard role-playing games have [for people] to gripe about. For example, all of the cinemas in this game are one hundred percent in-engine. You don't cut to this beautifully rendered cinema only to come back to this jarring gameplay; it flows seamlessly.

GR: WILL IT HAVE AN RPG BATTLE INTERFACE?
AT: Yes, there is an RPG battle interface. It's a real-time, turn-based battle system, meaning you have a timer and once your timer's up, you can make your move. It's very, very complex. **GR**

ANACHRONOX

sega scores again

BY M. PUCCINI

AN INTERVIEW WITH HIDEO KOJIMA METAL GEAR SOLID 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN AND NICK DES BARRES

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: WHAT WERE YOU ABLE TO DO WITH METAL GEAR SOLID 2 THAT YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO DO WITH THE FIRST ONE? THE ORIGINAL WAS SO GOOD EVEN AS IT WAS.

Hideo Kojima: The light and shadow effects not only act as graphics enhancements, but also, as you probably saw in the video, when you have the shadow, the enemy can actually see your shadow, so it also works as a gimmick that adds to the gameplay. Another thing is, we tried to create an environment where you can feel your presence, where you can feel the air, the temperature, and the moisture. For example, [there are] rain drops on your goggles when you look up, and splashes on your raincoat when you're on the deck in the heavy rain. All of this we were able to do by using a lot of the Emotion Engine's calculation capabilities. The AI of the soldiers in Metal Gear Solid 1 wasn't that great. They were like dummies. But now this time, with PlayStation 2, the AI has been improved so much. In Metal Gear Solid 1 it was Solid Snake and many singly working soldiers, but this time it's Snake versus a team of soldiers that work together. You have a captain and a co-captain giving orders to other soldiers, and they could be equipped differently, and they would be doing different things but working together as a team to attack Solid Snake. Solid Snake in return has to fight them in a different way. You have to use your brain and techniques. Solid Snake will also be hiding, he'll be using his stealth capabilities in different ways given the environment, and this all adds up to a higher level of the fun from stealth, the thrill.

GR: WHAT WAS THE MOST CRUCIAL POINT, THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IN THE GAME? YOU MENTIONED IT IN THE PAMPHLET, BUT I WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IT.

HK: Metal Gear Solid 2 is a game. It has to be fun when you play it. The gameplay has to be right. The controls have to be right. We are trying to find a balance between the gameplay and the graphics, but we do not want to spoil the gameplay, so that's why sometimes we have to reduce the number of polygons we use in certain spots, just to ensure that the gameplay is perfect. So if you look at one screen, it might not be as beautiful as some other games that have a high number of polygons with rendered backgrounds, but that is not our focus. We like to spend as much of the calculating powers on 3D environments where you can actually interact with stuff, destroy stuff, knock things down, stuff like that. Stuff like light, shadow, rain, all that. We like to maximize use of our resources for the creation of a real world in that 3D environment. For example, if it's important in the game for this table to be glass and for us to say that this is glass, the easiest way is to show a reflection in the table, so if we do that you have the model of the actual Solid Snake, and the model in the reflection, so that would be two models you're working with. Other games would probably ignore the reflection in the table, and they use all these polygons over here worth two models. They'd be using it in one character, so the character itself would look really beautiful with a lot of polygons, but then you won't have that reflection there. That'll be the difference.

GR: I READ IN FAMITSU THAT YOU SAID YOU WERE NOT USING A LOT OF POLYGONS IN SOLID 2. DID THAT MEAN THERE ARE OTHER TECHNOLOGIES BEING USED BESIDES POLYGONS?

HK: It's not that we're not using polygons. We're using polygons, but the number of polygons is probably less than the models in other games because we're using those polygons and the calculation capabilities in other areas of the room.

GR: FOR OTHER EFFECTS?

HK: Exactly. We just went to see The Bouncer and the models are really beautiful with a lot of polygons, but then you have a shadow that's a circle, just a black circle. In Metal Gear you'll have the model with the fewer polygons, but then you'll have a bunch of different shadows from different lights. We'll be using a lot of polygons there so it's just a different way of doing things.

GR: ARE THE AMAZING SHADOWS WE'RE SEEING IN METAL GEAR SOLID 2 CALCULATED IN HARDWARE OR IS IT SOFTWARE?

HK: Software. PlayStation 2 does not have those features. The hardware, the machine wouldn't do it. Xbox could do it.

GR: DOES EVERYTHING WE SEE IN THE TRAILER TAKES PLACE ON THE BOAT?

HK: It is on the tanker.

GR: BUT THERE ARE MORE AREAS TO THE GAME?

HK: Many more.

GR: IS THE FEMALE CHARACTER WITH THE SHORT HAIR THE OTHER RUMORED PLAYABLE CHARACTER?

HK: It's a secret.

GR: I WAS WONDERING IF THE "HISASHIBURI DANA KYODAI" ("IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, BROTHER.") WAS LIQUID?

HK: Yes. The voice of Liquid Snake.

GR: IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT DID YOU USE THE MIDDLEWARE?

HK: No, we were waiting for the middleware, but it never came, so we had to create our own software.

GR: HOW LONG HAS DEVELOPMENT BEEN PROCEEDING?

HK: We'd been doing basically experiments, and I guess from then on it's been a year.

GR: IT'S SO IMPRESSIVE FOR A YEAR. IS THE RECORDING COMPLETE FOR THE GAME?

HK: Only for the video. We've done experimental recording.

GR: WILL THE ORIGINAL ENGLISH VERSION VOICE ACTORS BE COMING BACK?

HK: We're not sure.

GR: If Metal Gear had not been so explosively popular, would your next project have been another Metal Gear or would it have been something else?
HK: That's what it was going to be actually; it was going to be something else. But with the popularity, I sort of had to. I also wanted to after seeing it was very well received in Europe and in the U.S. especially.

GR: Since your works are becoming so popular in English-speaking countries, is there a possibility that we'd ever see a translation of Policenauts?
HK: I do not want to go back to my past. I've got a lot of other games I'd like to create in the future lined up, and I wouldn't want to go back to old games.

GR: I see. But just for the English-speaking players who've never had a chance to...
HK: No.

GR: Will we see Meryl in Metal Gear Solid 2?
HK: It's a secret.

GR: Where is the game's development going from this point?
HK: We've pretty much finished the game system, the engine. The action and Solid Snake and the soldiers. From here we have to work on the story, the entire story, and then back it up by the construction on each stage, the characters that come into the game and all that. We still have a long way to go.

GR: Does that mean you don't have much time to spend on Z.O.E. (Zone of the Enders)?
HK: I'm the producer on Z.O.E. In Metal Gear Solid 2 I do the script, I design the maps, and I basically do everything. With Z.O.E. I'm the producer, so I give directions and provide my wonderful staff an environment in which they can do what they want to do, the way they want to do. And correct them now and then.

GR: The original MGS was all hand animation. I was wondering if Solid 2 uses motion capture.
HK: Solid Snake is not a real person, so there are some places where a human being cannot do things like swing up from when he's hanging, so things like that we have to do with hand animation. But there is a lot of motion capture.

GR: Where did you get the story ideas for Metal Gear Solid 2?
HK: I don't have to think. These ideas just keep popping up and I sort of have to suppress them because there's so many. If I don't sort of stop those ideas from coming up, they interfere with what I have to do. I have no problem getting ideas. The funny thing is that towards the end of development of the game, like at the very last stages, that's when crazy wonderful ideas come up. But you can't incorporate them into the game any more, because it's just too late.

GR: When is the release of Metal Gear Solid 2 in the U.S. and Europe?
HK: We're thinking between fall and the end of next year. The end of 2001. **GR**

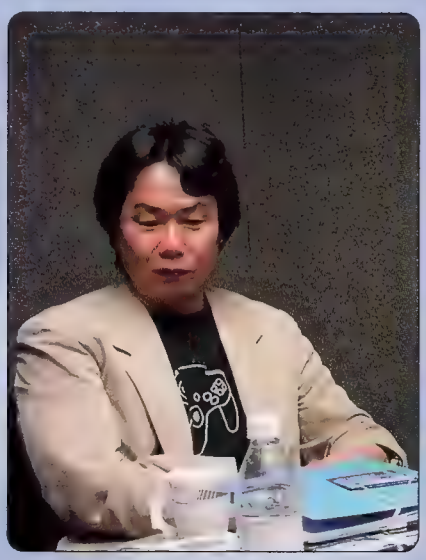
INTERVIEW: SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

BY MIKE HOBBS

Few game directors/producers can be said to possess genius. Konami's Hideo Kojima, Sega's Yu Suzuki and Yuji Naka and, of course, Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto can be counted among this elite group. We had a brief chat with Miyamoto-san at this year's E3, and though he was understandably tight-lipped about Dolphin, this humble, brilliant man nevertheless whetted our appetites for what is to come.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: PERHAPS WE CAN BEGIN BY TALKING ABOUT THE NEW ZELDA TITLE, MAJORA'S MASK. SPECIFICALLY, THE VISUAL STYLE OF MAJORA'S MASK IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF OCARINA OF TIME, A LITTLE DARKER AND MORE TWISTED. WHY WAS THIS DIRECTION CHOSEN?

Shigeru Miyamoto: Majora's Mask is not a true sequel to Ocarina of Time; it's another, separate story, so we wanted to make a completely fresh world. Also, unlike Ocarina of Time, I was not in direct charge of the game direction. Rather, I had asked the six other game directors to assume much more responsibility this time, and they wanted to make their own world. I think that's one of the reasons why the world image is pretty much completely different from the Ocarina of Time.



GR: WAS IT DIFFICULT TO RELINQUISH SOME CONTROL OVER THE DIRECTION OF THIS GAME?

SM: I have been letting many others take care of a lot of game design recently, and there are a number of Nintendo-developed games where I had no involvement as a director. So for most games, I have been acting in the role of producer, and that role varies very much depending on what kind of game we are working on. In some games, I am just involved in the very beginning of the planning stages and in the final, tuning stages. In the case of Majora's Mask, I helped to design the framework, and basically said to the other directors, "Please take care of everything else." Then they have to bring it to a higher and higher level until the end. If the result was bad, and I was not satisfied, then I would have stepped in. But fortunately, the results were really good, and in the end, I did not actually have to work very hard on Majora's Mask.

GR: IS THIS THE FUTURE COURSE FOR YOU WITHIN NINTENDO?

SM: No. It's simply that we want to add more titles to Nintendo's library. We have many more young people coming to Nintendo on the development side, and since many of the main directors who were involved in many past series are nearly 40 years old, they are now ready to take on much more responsibility. Especially now with the launch of the Dolphin system, I want more of these guys to take more active roles.

GR: HOW DOES NINTENDO ASSURE THAT THE SPECIFIC QUALITIES OF NINTENDO GAMES SURVIVE?

SM: Gamers should not worry about this, as there are several people at Nintendo who understand the Nintendo quality level and particulars of the Nintendo "feeling."

GR: WITH THAT, WE MUST ASK THE INEVITABLE DOLPHIN QUESTIONS...

SM: [Laughter] I'm afraid we are not ready to discuss anything about Dolphin yet, except to say that we are on the right track.

GR: OH, WE HAD SO MANY DOLPHIN QUESTIONS! HOW ABOUT VERY GENERAL QUESTIONS?

SM: OK.

GR: HOW DOES THE EXPECTED POWER OF THE DOLPHIN CHANGE THE WAY YOU APPROACH GAME DESIGN?

SM: I think that it has a lot of impact. For example, the N64, among the so-called next-generation machines from some years ago, was truly a next-generation video-game system. Specifically, it had realized a true three-dimensional gaming environment for the first time in the history of the video-game world. And through the course of making games for the N64, we were the first to train the programmers, to get them accustomed to the three dimensional gaming environment, and they learned many techniques and gained a huge amount of insight. Now we are talking about a massive upgrade over the N64, and we can tell you that we are going to provide game developers with a much more comfortable development environment, which should lead to a shorter time period for making good games.

GR: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR NINTENDO TO CREATE DEVELOPMENT TOOLS FOR THIRD PARTIES?

SM: If everybody utilizes identical tools, it is often the case then that everybody comes up with very similar looking video games. But in the case of the N64, if we could have provided the developers with more variety of development tools, we could have had more titles. For Dolphin, we are working with several different companies to make the development tools. Of course, I cannot tell you which companies, but it's important to make good tools to lessen the time of development. But as I said, we are concerned about the possibility of seeing similar-looking video games.

GR: Where do you see Dolphin fitting into the new wave of powerful hardware?

SM: Of course, Dolphin will be following the PlayStation 2 launch, and in terms of the hardware, it's going to have better performance, and by the same token, the Xbox should have better performance than the Dolphin. But in a sense, it's meaningless to compare the game machine specifications, especially since most of us have realized that better graphics and better technology will not necessarily provide the customers with better content or quality or more interesting video games. So who is actually going to create new and interesting game ideas? That's the key to success in exploring this new era of video-game machines. Until we can show you something more complete, we just cannot tell you of the beauty involved in the Dolphin hardware. At least I can repeat that it's meaningless to talk about specs, and remember that we will always be focused on the beauty of game design.

GR: Do you feel that the Dolphin is entering a vastly different market than the one occupied by the N64?

SM: Once there was a time when video games were conceived as fun, a pure and completely fulfilling entertainment, and that's not the case nowadays. We have so many other good avenues for pleasure, and enjoying video games itself cannot be fun enough for long. Am I saying that video games have lost their interest? Well, I don't think so. For example, the portable-type video games are booming.

GR: Are you looking forward to exploring 2D again on the Game Boy Advance?

SM: I am not confined to 2D or 3D ideas at all. I'm rather more interested in the portable aspect of the system, being able to carry the game with you anywhere, and connecting several systems with each other to make one game world. If new ideas incorporating this concept require three-dimensional game graphics, even if it is somewhat difficult, or maybe even impossible, still I'll try to make it happen on Game Boy Advance.

GR: Sega is currently pushing network and online play very heavily, and Sony is expected to follow suit with PS2. What is Nintendo's stance on network gaming?

SM: It's a very delicate thing. It would probably take me thirty minutes to explain my viewpoint fully, but I'll try to give a straight and short answer. As I said, there are a number of different applications available nowadays, including portable game systems and home console systems and so forth, and network games are merely another one of these avenues for entertainment. And while people may be becoming accustomed to more beautiful graphics or better music and so forth, perhaps it is time that we begin to think about something new. On the other hand, we as a company have to be very cool and critical about it. For example, if we are going to make use of the telephone network, we have to realize that the network system is different in each country around the world. In Japan, the company that benefits most is NTT (Nippon Telephone and Telegraph), whatever games we are going to make online, and we have to create some special system so that we can get some money. And the infrastructure is different in some other parts of the world, where we can make more money by making other types of games. So we cannot just make one game and have it work all over the world. We have to realize that it's not an easy job, and as a company we have to think very carefully whether or not to go ahead with it. And when we look at today's situation, there is a tendency to say that networking and online games are the future, and some companies feel that they may be regarded as cool or hip to say such things. But they are all illusions, they are all lies, and Nintendo must retain a cool and critical attitude. We won't jump into online gaming blindly.

GR: Does the concept of online multiplayer games excite you from a creative standpoint?

SM: I'm interested in online gaming in terms of game design, but if I explain what is so interesting or attractive about it, it's like giving away what kind of ideas I have, and to come up with ideas, that is the job to be taken care of by the game directors. I cannot tell you the details. But I can say that it is an interesting application. Nintendo has already started its Randnet DD system in Japan, even though it has a limited number of members. In the near future, the Game Boy will connect to cell phones, and by doing so, some kind of data exchange can be done. So even with small steps, we have been approaching online aspects steadily.

GR: Do you find multiplayer games appealing?

SM: When I think of multiplayer experiences, I'm more interested in seeing the whole family enjoying the game, rather than the Tekken-type game, where only the professional players can have a good match. I want an experience where good players and not-so-good players can share a common interest and joy. That's what I'm interested in. But I'm also interested in games where only one player can play and get very much involved in it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 139 ▸

EVERGRACE

BY MIKE HOBBS

From Software's second PS2 effort is showing promise. With a little tweaking, we could be looking at a superb launch title

From Software is the only PS2 developer other than Namco that has thus far released two games for the still-maturing system. Admirably jumping in with both feet, their efforts have sadly not equaled Namco's. Eternal Ring, From's launch title, was a pretty dull and lifeless effort, mostly unremarkable save for the glimpses of the PS2's buried power with its hi-res, solid look. Things have improved with Evergrace, their second try, as it is both better looking and a lot more fun to play, but there is evidence again of a losing fight against the complex hardware and a lack of polish hinting at a rushed schedule.

Designed as a more satisfying third- person action/adventure/RPG, Evergrace is a fairly straightforward game, with a two-character scenario giving players two different adventures to enjoy. Solving simple puzzles and engaging in real-time combat using the analog buttons to determine hit strength, Evergrace's play is sturdy, if somewhat sluggish, and there is some pleasure to be had in outfitting one's character and playing around with different weapon combinations. Kind of a poor man's Vagrant Story, weapons can be mixed with gems to produce different magic attacks and new forms of offense. And in a nice visual touch, the character's on-screen appearance will change to reflect new armor and weapons. This so-called "Dress Up" system is actually a big part of the gameplay, as one can be graded on appearance, and will even be denied access to certain areas because of one's dress.

Like the slightly curious gameplay, Evergrace's visuals are hit and miss. For instance, even with the apparent struggle with the hardware, there is a sheen to this game that cannot be found on Dreamcast; there's just something about the way the PS2 displays polygons and colors that makes everything seem to jump off the screen in shimmering hi-res. But there is certainly a lack of polygonal complexity on display, and even worse, bouts of slow down and the occasional texture glitch. Overall, though, a very good looking game.

As with many of the PS2's titles, Evergrace fails to get the complete gameplay and graphics package together, but as an expected American launch title, Evergrace will no doubt succeed by virtue of its existence. GR

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ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

BY SHOLA AKINNUSO

Fighting games have been available for so long, running through the entire gamut of moves and options, that the genre is teetering on the edge of redundancy. Some might even say that fighting games, 3D or otherwise, are so mired in their ways that it's too late to change their veritable stripes.

But don't tell that to Crave. The production team responsible for Ultimate Fighting Championship on the Dreamcast made efforts to acquire the programmers behind the quirky, although highly respected, technical fighter Tobal 1, and hired a team of Namco's top Tekken and Soul Blade artisans, accomplishing, even this early in development, the impossible: an amazing new genre of fighting game. Falling somewhere between the sensationalism of pro-wrestling and the brutal realism of simulated pit-fighting, UFC has photo-realistic models of over 20 well-known UFC combatants, animations that rival Soul Calibur or Dead or Alive 2, and may be one of the most realistic fighters we've ever played.

Executive producer Mike Arkin stresses that the goal of the game is to simulate true martial combat. Combining a series of flailing attacks, exotic styles, and a precision-based grappling system very similar to the Tobal counter and reversal techniques, UFC's matches are realistic. The final version should have fights that last up to three minutes, with the promise of attention to bruised faces and vicious, true-to-UFC take-downs and ground-based reversals.

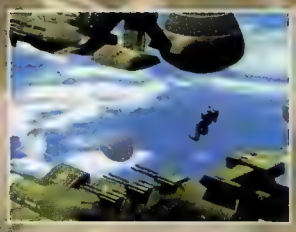
What is amazing about UFC is that every fighter will have his trademark moves, with fight animations and characteristics that represent their styles, and the game should be both authentic in its martial arts and appeal to hardcore wrestling fans. One of the game's merits is a grappler character's more ground-based reversals and counters as opposed to a boxer, whose versatility resides in the punching and, perhaps, kicking accuracy.

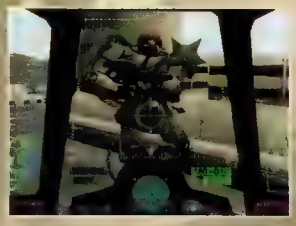
Currently, UFC is the only good game of its type. Capturing the ferocity of the televised matches with expertly replicated camera angles and television-style presentation, and commentary from UFC longtime luminaries, this game is destined to be a smashing surprise hit. GR

IT'S A WORLD OF INTENSE ACCURACY, RICH GRAPHICS AND UNBELIEVABLE DETAILS. NOW GET OUT THERE AND DESTROY IT.

GUNDAM SIDE STORY 0079

It's Gundam Side Story 0079, Rise from the Ashes with 3D battle simulation, movie-quality sound track and Gundam – quality mass destruction. Electronic Gaming Monthly™ called it, "... some of the richest graphics yet on Dreamcast. Each of the mechs are cut with so much detail, they look like FMV at a glance." And a glance is all the insidious Zaku forces will get, before your jump jet action and zoom-in weapon features blow them into another dimension.





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• developer / publisher capcom • available summer

POWER STONE 2

BY MIKE HOBBS

Capcom's ambitious Power Stone sequel takes free-roaming fighting to a new level. A dazzling multiplayer experience awaits

As one of a handful of modern 3D fighters that exist outside the confines of style as dictated by games like Tekken or Dead or Alive, Capcom's Power Stone remains one of the most original and immediately satisfying fighting games around. A true breath of fresh air, the need to learn arbitrary and complicated button commands was nixed in favor of a more free-form and creative style of play, allowing fighters to use their environment in combat like never before. And while some may have complained that the game's simplicity stunted its shelf life, we've always found the game to be fun every single time we pick it up.

With Power Stone 2, Capcom has taken a second crack at their inspired initial concept, and the end result is an ambitious, proper sequel, adding layer upon layer of new ideas to the still intact kernel of the first game. In fact, Capcom has done so much tinkering that those hoping for a mere extension of Power Stone, a more traditionally designed sequel, may be put off initially, perhaps even disappointed, for there has been a great shift in the game's focus. Whereas the original Power Stone was and is a great two-player experience, this sequel offers up a merely good two-player game, and in its place is a great four-player experience.

Why is this? Basically, it's all to do with Power Stone 2's new level architecture. In the first game, combat was tightly focused within the compact environments, perfect for one-on-one play. Now, having to accommodate the concept of four-player simultaneous fighting, Capcom has devised these absolutely sprawling new levels, almost all of which run through a staged sequence of events that bring a truly original and exciting dynamic to the play. In one environment, the floor of a stone room falls away, dropping the players in the path of a giant rolling boulder, fighting on the run. In another, the first portion of the level begins to burn, forcing players to make their way up shaky wooden platforms to the top of a Japanese temple, where the battle continues once inside. Combat can even take to the sky, as fighters free-fall off the deck of a giant airship. And adding even more action to some of these stages is a multitude of interactive weapons, like gun turrets, rock-loaded catapults, and tanks that can be used for quick dollops of firepower. However, as entertaining as these new elements are, they can become distractions in the one-on-one game; without the chaos of four

characters running around the huge environments, the tightly tuned action of the first game is gone, replaced by a more chaotic fun-house ride that is often less about fighting and even more about working the environment. As another caveat, there has been a drop in texture quality over the first game due to the memory and processor demands of the greatly enlarged fighting stages. Without a doubt there is a tradeoff at work here, but Capcom at least deserves a lot of credit for taking the series in a bold new direction.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the new characters. Far too gimmicky and self-conscious, they lack the appeal of the original set. No one wanted to use Gourmand, the fat fop of a chef; Pete, the little boy robot; or Julia, the dainty, hoop-dressed lady fighter. Only the cowboy-themed Accel approaches the appeal of original characters like Ryoma, Fokker, and Rouge. Some may get into these funky new characters, and I had hoped that they would grow on me over time, but alas, this has not been the case.

A fairly minor complaint, to be sure, especially considering the staggering new feature set in this sequel, which includes team battle and copious item manipulation. And while Power Stone 2 may not fully satisfy strong proponents of the first game when it's released later this summer, no one should be able to ignore the game's worth as a great, truly original and thrilling four-player fighting game. **GR**

• developer sega • publisher sega • available summer

VIRTUA TENNIS

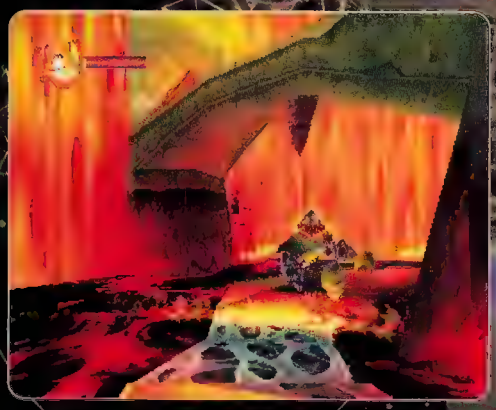
BY DAVE HALVERSON

While I'd rather be staring at Kornikova's butt cheeks, Sega's Virtua Tennis is the next best thing

The most underrepresented genre in all of sports gaming, Tennis, just happens to translate into a better gaming experience than just about any other. So why then is the genre so underrepresented? I suppose it's due to the fact that Tennis hasn't yet reached the level of mainstream acceptance that Baseball, Hockey, Football, and Basketball have in the States. Then again, neither has Soccer, and yet there exists more games than we will ever need. Since the launch of the Dreamcast, I have patiently waited for Tennis gaming to take the same gigantic leap that the other sports have, and now finally I can say with great conviction that it has, and it was well worth the wait. Sega Japan has assembled a breathtakingly gorgeous game of tennis complete with smooth, ultra-realistic animation, replays that would make HBO green, the best-looking crowd ever seen in a sports game, and precise physics.

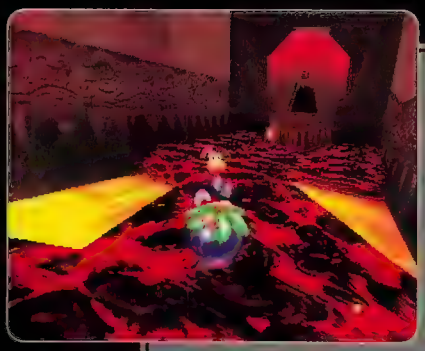
The controls are as finely tuned as the graphics—simple and intuitive, and you can step right up and just dive on in. But as you grow accustomed to the game's realistic nuances, right down to the weather and court type, you'll soon find yourself deep into each match, pitching lobs, hitting behind your back, and setting up brutal slams. A new meter is used to maximize serving—a nice touch—and players dive and roll as they would in real life, producing an amazingly true-to-life effect.

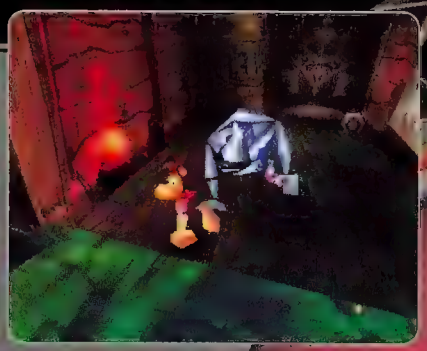
An exquisite game, really. The music is respect all around, courtesy of Sega Japan (thank you for leaving Off Spring out of this one), and each court is represented perfectly with true to life dimensions and surfaces. The only non-love event going on here, and it's a big one, is that the women's draw is nowhere in the house, which means...no Kornikova, Hingus, Williams, etc...bah! The men's draw is well represented but, then again, you can't look up their skirts, now can you. We'll have a full review of Virtua Tennis as soon as we receive a final. GR

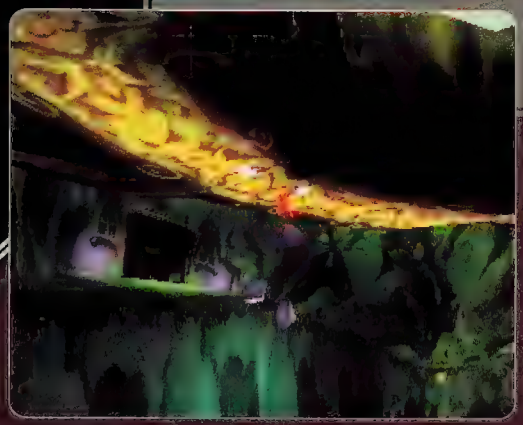


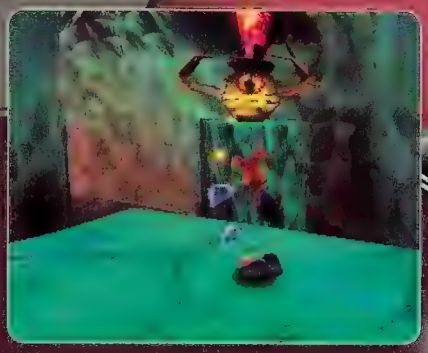
RAYMAN 2
THE GREAT ESCAPE

BY J.R. HAUGEN









Rayman 2 is simply a game that will not go away. Its most glorious console form was on the Dreamcast, and there was a similarly impressive installment on the N64. At E3 Ubi Soft displayed a playable version for PlayStation 2, which hinted at even more magic to come. As expected, Rayman 2 is coming to the PlayStation, essentially ensuring that everyone who owns a video-game system will be able to experience such a wonderful game. For those who have played through the already available versions, looking at the newest one will be a ghastly experience. But for those who have not yet had a chance to play it, the PlayStation Rayman 2 delivers a fair representation of what it's like to explore Rayman's enchanted world.

The differences between this one and previous releases are easily noticeable, but not especially distracting. The textures are duller and, of course, not animated, and the transparencies have all been filled in.

Some of the level architecture has been changed as well. But what remains is the fluid play mechanics, which hold the game together quite well.

While most of this edition's shortcomings can be attributed to the aging PlayStation hardware, there is simply no excuse for the abhorrent manner in which the voices have been butchered. Rayman was once known to speak nothing but fanciful gibberish with just a touch of French. What PlayStation owners will be treated to is full-on English dialogue, with Rayman sounding like a displaced Brooklynite. The game has thus been stripped of some of its charm, but fortunately you can skip these scenes and enjoy the rest of the game.

If you have played any other version of Rayman 2, you'll want to stay far away, but if all you have is a PlayStation, this looks to be a fairly faithful version of the game. It even has added levels, plus a "lost level" salvaged from the Rayman 2 2D game that was scrapped several years ago. GR

RAYCRISIS

BY MIKE HOBBS

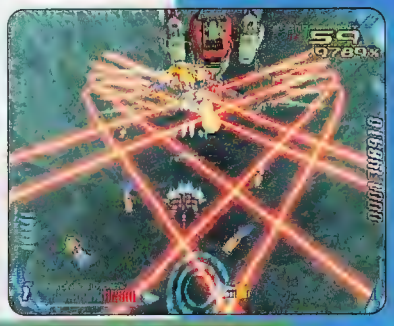
It's not often that we get to preview a new overhead shooter for domestic release. In fact, this is the first time since the inception of GR that we have been able to do so. Once a mainstay, the shooter genre has sadly been relegated to niche status in this country; the games simply don't sell. And that's really a shame, for few genres can offer the type of joy inherent in good shooters, all of which require fast reactions and intense concentration while offering nonstop action, and in the best examples, highly developed imagery. And as such games go, Taito's Raycrisis is a stunner.

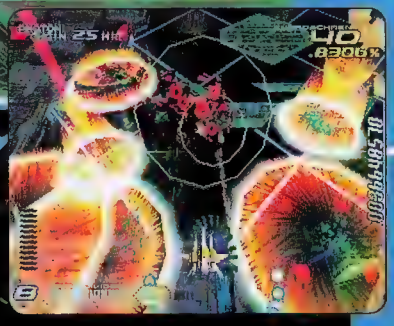
A straight continuation of Raystorm, Raycrisis follows the classic sequel design brief: a handful of additions, better graphics, and all-new environments, but basically playing just like the first game. For a shooter, this formula works wonderfully, and indeed, in look and feel, Raycrisis is nearly identical.

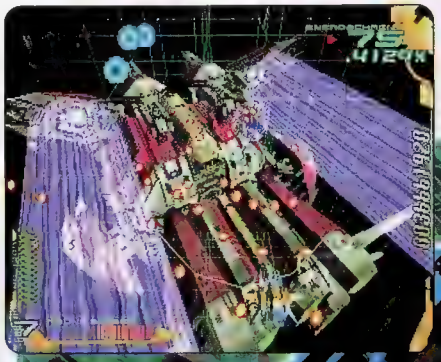
The game is played from the same top-down, 3/4 perspective that fueled Raystorm, but there are more camera shifts this time around, some of the best moments occurring when the camera dips low and behind the player for a dramatic, deep-field view. Play mechanics still revolve around a satisfying lock-on system, though now there is a third ship added to the arsenal, an easy-to-use craft with homing shots as the standard weapon. Sadly absent in Raycrisis, however, is the first game's two-player simultaneous mode. Apparently, the increased poly count has made this impossible.

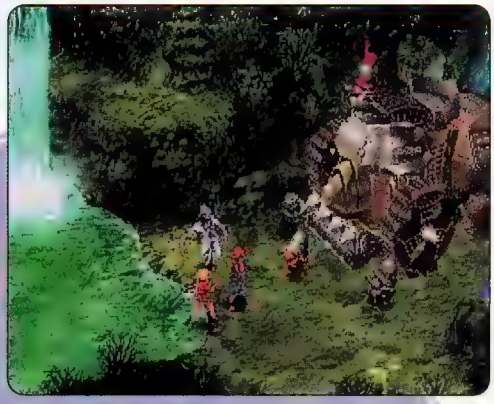
Choosing graphics over two-player fun must have been a difficult decision for developers Taito to make, but it has paid off in one respect: Raycrisis is the best-looking PS shooter since the horribly overlooked R-Type Delta. There is a technical brilliance to the backgrounds, awash in polygonal detail and appealing texture work, and populated by fantastic-looking mechanical creations. The only thing it lacks is that last bit of artistry that can be found in the god of overhead shooters, Radiant Silvergun, but it's certainly the new standard bearer on PlayStation. And, of course, a typically perfect Zuntata soundtrack brings the whole thing together.

When it's released, Raycrisis will probably sell to the remaining hardcore shooter contingent, and not much beyond that. It deserves to do better, and I hope that newer gamers will at least give it a chance. This genre's still around for a reason, and nothing else satisfies the need for pure action like a good shooter. GR









CHRONO CROSS

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Chrono Cross is a marvelous role playing game, a grand fairy tale whose world comes alive with intrepid heroes and bold sidekicks, colorful characters and fantastical settings. Because it is the sequel to one of Square's finest achievements, Chrono Trigger, it has much to live up to. I was not disappointed.

The story begins with our hero, Serge, a young boy who descends into a parallel reality in which he has ostensibly been dead for a decade. He soon finds that his presence in this world is a profound paradox, and his journey to find his way back to his previous existence soon becomes a complex endeavor, bound in unexpected consequence and dangers. Severe complications arise when a villainous creature who possess both human and cat features enters the picture, provoking Serge and his allies to compete for the retrieval of the Frozen Flame, a chimerical device thought to manipulate space time. Finding the Frozen Flame and going home is only the beginning of Serge's quest, and, in faithful RPG fashion, destiny, mysteries, philosophizing, war, story twists and emotional storms all form scenes that rarely falter, often succeed intensely, sometimes packing unsuspecting emotional strength. Because time travel and the existence of alternate dimensions is a major theme, the passage from one reality to the next gives the game an added dimension of intrigue, even if its concepts are sometimes awkward and contrived.

Against a rich backdrop of beautiful, striking prerendered images that retain a soft, natural hand-drawn tone, we travel through towns, over the seas, into the depths of dungeons and caves, across swamps and through forests, discovering answers and new friends along the way. It's the kind of course you've taken before, but rarely is it this involving. As many as 40 characters can be convinced to join your cause, and their contribution is often valuable and welcome, impacting the story instead of convoluting it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 139 ▸

BREATH OF FIRE IV

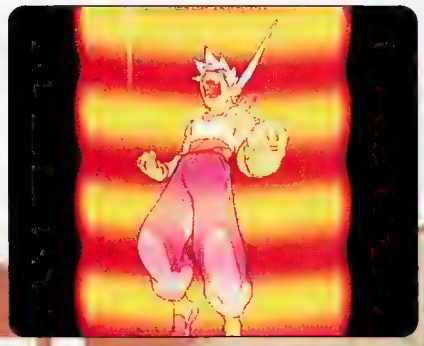
BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Capcom brings players back to a world of mystery, magic and dragon-morphing powers in this epic RPG fantasy

Breath of Fire IV takes players back to a world where magic and swordplay reign supreme and monstrous winged dragons soar through the sky. This installment of Capcom's epic RPG series continues in the style of its predecessors with players controlling Ryu, a young man with the ability to transform into a dragon, along with a secondary dragon-man called Fou-Lu. They're backed by a unique supporting cast with special abilities and distinct personalities: the requisite winged-girl Nina; the beast-man Cray; the gun-toting Ursula; the self-absorbed robot Master.

Like BOF3, part 4 features sprite characters with fully rotatable 3D backgrounds, all drawn in a smooth, pastel-filled anime style. The animation is incredible—over 3000 frames per character. Blocking, taking a hit, casting spells—all are smooth and lovely. You can even see Fou-Lu smirk as he draws his blade.

Traditional RPG elements like turn-based combat, magic spells and huge dungeons to explore make up the bulk of gameplay, but BOF4 includes other facets not found in most RPGs. The game features a unique combo system where using characters' special attacks in sequence can result in a super-high-impact technique, plus characters can learn new attacks from their enemies. BOF4 also has more mini-games than Capcom has Street Fighter sequels. Whether you're loading boxes onto a boat or reeling in flounder with Agetec's fishing controller, the high level of fun rarely drops. Looks like yet another great PS RPG. GR



GRIND SESSION

BY TOM STRATTON

Sony's approach to publishing a skateboarding game has proven to be smart and well-thought-out if uninspired. Most of the major requisites skaters/gamers are looking for have been installed, though the recipe was already outlined for them by a certain bird of prey. Where other developers have stuck to their guns and proposed skating games with a different attitude, Shaba and Sony have decided to copy what has worked so well with the industry's most successful skateboarding game, having no shame in mimicking the exact play mechanics, button configuration and even re-creating some of the same skating locales...bold, very bold.

So let's look a little closer. From the start, great skating footage. The roster? Well, about a dozen of the best talent in professional skateboarding, not including the skate rat you can build yourself in Create a Skater. The soundtrack seems to have been built through a long process of careful placement, a growing trend in video games. There's a training course where you can begin to learn the basics in grinding, sliding and aerials. Points are divvied into respect and technical abilities, though both are a bit iffy since the game is so forgiving: If you launch off of the lip of any vert ramp and stray away from it during re-entry, the game will automatically adjust your position and level you out so that you don't slam into the waiting concrete. It serves the general purpose of keeping the game moving, but takes away from the need of being accurate in your execution of the move.

I have tried to be careful not to mention or directly compare this title to Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, but I have come to realize it is inevitable, as the game offers the same play style and ingenuity that Neversoft has created with their game—a great compliment to the Tony Hawk team. Nevertheless, as for Sony, it is a shame they could not use some of their clout to conceptualize a skateboarding game all their own. GR

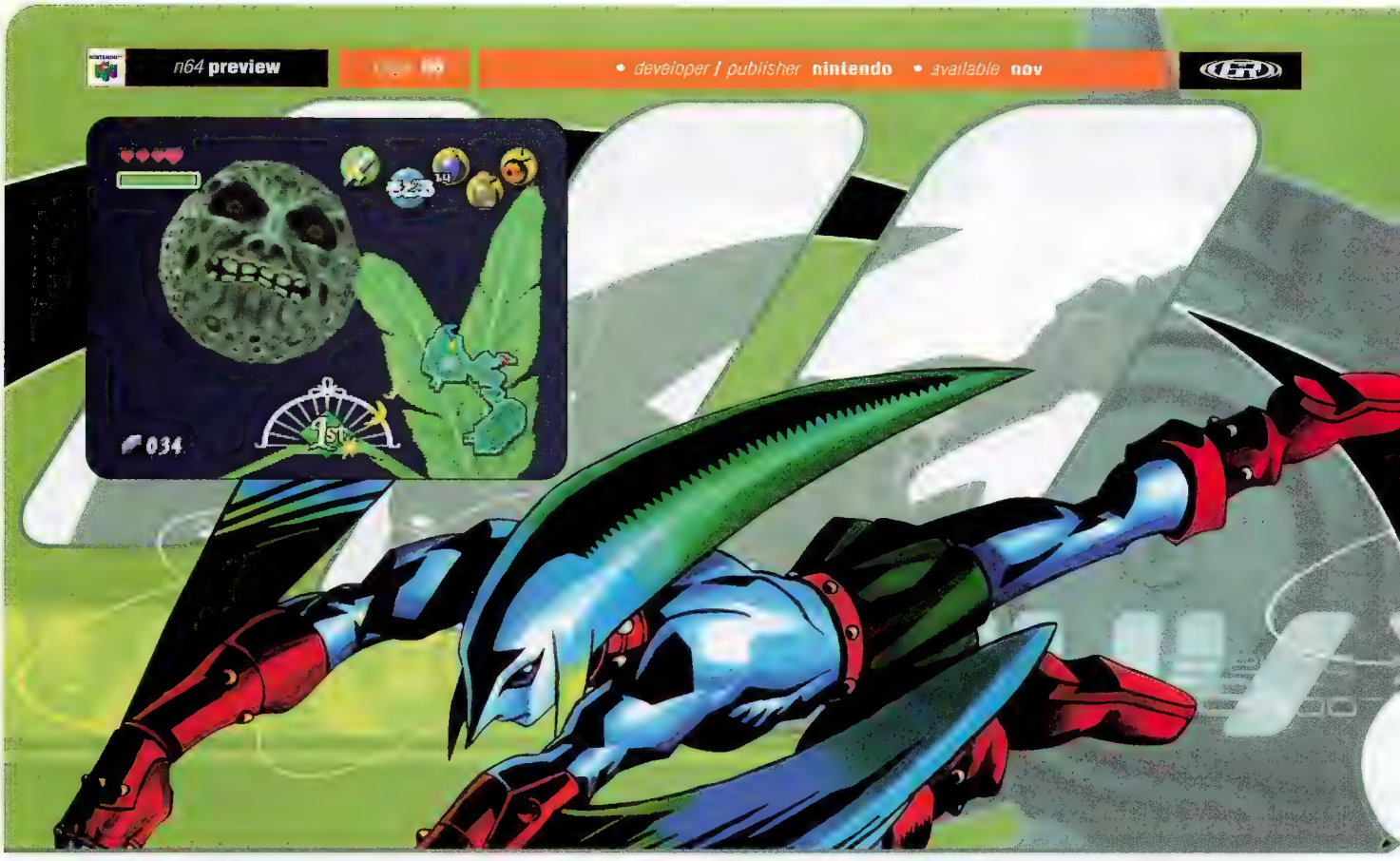
daewon song

- nice locations with lots of variety
- smooth frame rate and sharp visuals
- tony hawk clones yes...big time
- gameplay is geared towards novice gamers

REPUBLIC SAYS... SONY HAS DONE A GOOD ENOUGH JOB REPLICATING THE SPORT OF SKATEBOARDING. THE PACKAGE IS TIGHT, JUST A BIT TOO FAMILIAR.

B

• developer / publisher nintendo • available nov



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA MAJORA'S MASK

BY J.R. HAUGEN

Link returns to the Nintendo 64 in a very different kind of adventure. Time is running out to uncover the mask of Majora

The Legend of Zelda series has long since earned its place in the video-game hall of fame, and each successive entry only strengthens its bid. Many have been wary about this follow-up to Ocarina of Time, an indisputable masterpiece, claiming it's merely a set of leftovers from OoT, that it's not a true Miyamoto work. Regardless of whether any of that is true, Majora's Mask stands as a perfect counterpart to OoT—a wonderfully executed addition to the annals of Link.

Shortly after his triumph over Ganon in the last game, Link is accosted in the forest by a peculiar masked figure called Stalkid, who steals Epona and the Ocarina of Time, and turns Link into a walking Deku nut. The mysterious assailant then sets the wheels in motion for the moon to smash into the world at the end of three days, and it's up to Link to prevent this from occurring.

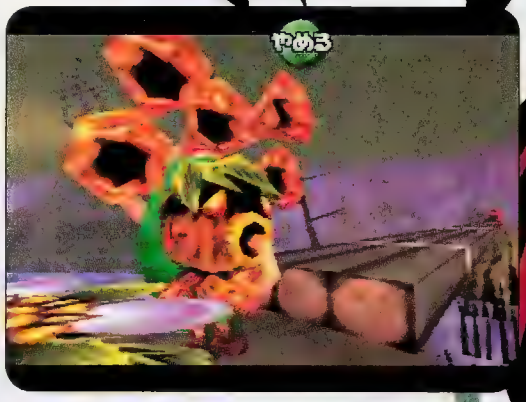
Stripped of his items and abilities, Link finds himself in a Bizarro alternate universe, where reality has been seemingly turned upside down. The differences between Hyrule and this new world are very similar to those between the worlds of light and dark in A Link to the Past on the SNES; people and places have a similar feel, but take on a decidedly outré quality. For instance, when you go to a fairy pond, there are no pinkish will-o'-the-wisps, but instead tiny glowing fetuses floating about. You'll see familiar characters in new roles, and learn more about ones only briefly dealt with in OoT.

The play dynamic from OoT has been so radically altered as to make MM seem like an entirely different game. The controls and most of the items remain the same, but the three-day time limit changes everything. Each day is roughly 20 minutes in real time, and if you don't suc-

ceed at the required task in three days, the moon plummets into the planet in a disturbing sequence of death and destruction. Thus you must complete a series of three-day quests and repeatedly set the clock back to zero. Certain events will only happen at certain times on certain days, so you must be aware of everything that's going on. Fortunately, you can find a logbook that keeps track of all your missions.

Another important mechanic is the use of masks. Unlike the Ocarina of Time, masks now play an integral part, where the plot is advanced solely through wearing the right mask at the right time. The important masks even alter Link's body. For instance, as a Deku scrub, Link can burrow into flowers, shoot out of them, and fly around, as well as blow bubbles. There is a separate status screen relegated just to keeping track of all the masks you find.

The millions of Zelda fans out there have absolutely nothing to fear from the latest installment; the game is in good hands. The only downside is that while both the Japanese and American versions of Ocarina of Time were released the same week in 1998, the U.S. has to wait about seven months to get



Majora's Mask.

Rather than rehash a great game and make another great game, Nintendo has taken a great game and made it possibly even better.

GR

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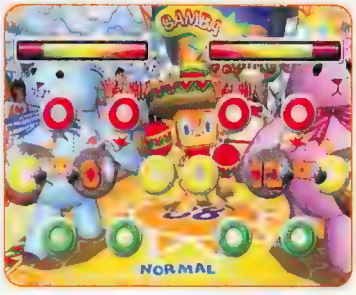
PS2 | PlayStation | Dreamcast | NINTENDO64

samba de amigo

preview by jr haugen • dev: sonic team • pub: sega • avail: fall

Sega has a new mascot on its hands. Amigo the monkey says nothing at all, but wears a sombrero and shakes his maracas with such utter exuberance that you can't help but smile and shake your bon-bon. Samba de Amigo, in its most basic form, is simply another in the line of Bemani-type games, where you have to use your musical input device to keep time with the beats in the game. But in essence, it is so much more than that. In this case, the instrument of choice is a pair of maracas. A pad you stand on senses the location of the maracas, and you must shake them in the right place at the right time to keep the music going. The beats are indicated onscreen by blue spheres that float toward six rings, indicating the six locations in which you can shake the maracas.



Whether you play the game with the maracas or just your Dreamcast controller doesn't matter, because the game will grow on you no matter what. The musical selection is exciting and infectious, with Latin remixes like "El Mambo," "El Ritmo Tropical," and "Samba de Janeiro," but there are also familiar tunes like "Macarena," "Tubthumping," "Tequila," and a ska remix of A-Ha's "Take on Me." The arcade version even features "Livin' la Vida Loca." The addiction is like that of Tetris: when you've played it long enough, the music and gameplay will be burned into your thoughts like images from a John Holmes movie.

While you're focusing on the rings and spheres, there is a manic fiesta going on in the background. Amigo is shaking his maracas vigorously, his Carnival-themed amiga Linda dances up a storm, and just about everything else, living or non-living, moves and jumps to the groove. Sometimes they're dancing in the streets, other times it's on a concert stage, and you even sometimes warp into a bizarre multicolored confluence of mustachioed suns and luminescent flying saucers.

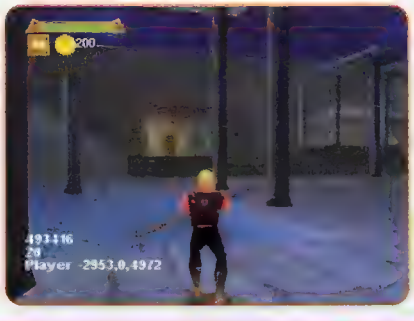
It's unclear what the soundtrack will consist of in the American version, but there's no doubt it will get your body moving. Sega's got a great, wonderfully original game on its hands. **GR**

Hercules: The Legendary Journeys

preview by jr haugen • dev: player 1 • pub: titus • avail: july

I don't know how many GR readers are fans of the show (which sadly came to an end this past fall). In fact, I don't even know a single person who is a fan of the show, but I know I am, and am glad to see this game come along. This is the kind of game where upon hearing about it, someone will probably scoff, but upon playing, it isn't too bad at all. Much in the vein of Zelda 64, you control Hercules (the Kevin Sorbo version) in a full 3D world, fighting and interacting with familiar monsters and people from the series, such as Nespa, Mnemosyne, and Salmoneus. You even get to play as three characters: Hercules, who brawls through a situation; Iolaus, who wields a quarterstaff; and Serena, the Golden Hind and Hercules' erstwhile wife, who is skilled with the bow and arrow.

The goal is to overthrow Ares, who has taken Zeus' place due to Hera's treachery. The graphics so far look decent for N64, but the camera should be tweaked, plus the game is practically begging for some sort of auto-targeting mechanism. **GR**



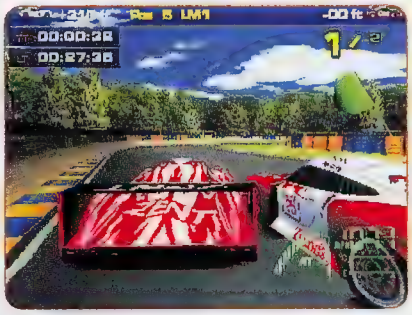
Test Drive Le Mans

preview by m hobbs • dev: eutechnyx • pub: infogrames • avail: now

A slow burn compared with the condensed electricty of Formula One or Touring Car, the 24 hours of Le Mans is nonetheless one of the most dramatic and legendary race series on the planet. Watching cars race through dusk and dawn is simply a beautiful sight, a true testament to the breadth of modern engineering. Something of that flavor is captured in Test Drive Le Mans from European developers Eutechnyx, previously responsible for Gran Tour Racing.

With a full spate of GT1, GT2, and Prototype cars, TDLM will satisfy what few followers there are in the States, and that pretty much sums up this game as well. A fairly strong engine and easy to grasp, arcade-like control makes Test Drive Le Mans an easy sell for more casual race fans, but without a familiarity or affection for the 24 hours of Le Mans, there are better-looking and better-playing race games out there. But as an attempt to mimic the drama of the race series, TDLM is admirable. For the absolutely insane, there is an unabridged 24 hour mode, which really seems like some kind of health hazard to me. The more reasonable 12 minute mode is where most will spend their time, and it offers the treat of seeing day turn to night turn to day in rapid succession.

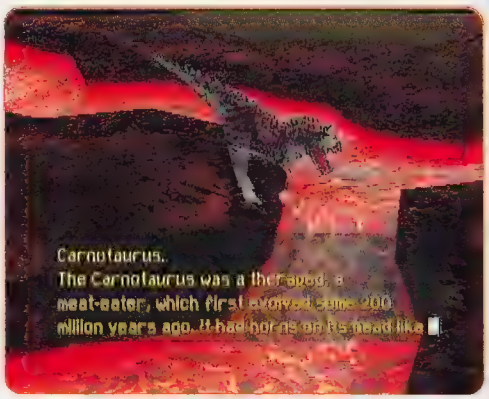
Like a good Formula One game, Test Drive Le Mans is not broadly appealing, but it accomplishes its goals with a modicum of flair. **GR**



Disney's Dinosaur

preview by pooch • dev: sand box studios • pub: ubi soft • avail: july

By the time you read this, the movie "Dinosaur" will have been released, amassed a small fortune and spawned a variety of related merchandise. Or at least that's what Ubi Soft is banking on, as they've secured the PS video game rights. The company sent us an early version of the Sand Box-developed game based on, and mirroring, the Disney movie. At this point, probably the best thing about it is that the in-between level cut scenes are actual clips of the plot points in the movie. The opening is a grandiose, sweeping piece that has a pteranodon grabbing a dinosaur egg out of a stream and then flying through various dinosaur-infested areas on the way back to its nest. The clips are quite stunning and bring the player to the next of the 11 maze-like levels in the game.


Carnotaurus.
The Carnotaurus was a theropod, a
meat-eater, which first evolved some 200
million years ago. It had horns on its head like

Played in a 3/4-overhead perspective, Dinosaur lets players take control of three different characters from the movie: Aladar, the iguanodon, Zini, the lemur and Flia, the pteranodon. All three characters can roam the environments independently or together. The trio needs to work together to complete the game's objectives, which include battling enemy dinosaurs, collecting stones, sticks and power crystals, and grabbing fruit from trees. An RPG-style point system allows the characters to increase their abilities throughout the adventure.

With its simple character controls, uninspiring graphics and basic level design, the game seems to be aimed squarely at younger players. There's even an educational aspect to Dinosaur with the inclusion of an area where players can learn facts about the dinosaurs used in the game, such as the albertosaur, ankylosaur, brachiosaur and the ferocious carnotaurus. **GR**

Gamers' Republic Reviews

Games Reviewed This Issue

Domestic Reviews

Deep Fighter DC	D
Digimon World PS	C-
Draconus DC	B+
Duke Nukem:PoTB PS	C-
Gauntlet Legends DC	B
Gekido PS	D
Legend of Dragoon PS	B+
Legend of Mana PS	A-
Rhapsody PS	B-
Space Channel 5 DC	B+
Surf Riders PS	C
Threads of Fate PS	B-
Transformers BW:T PS	B-

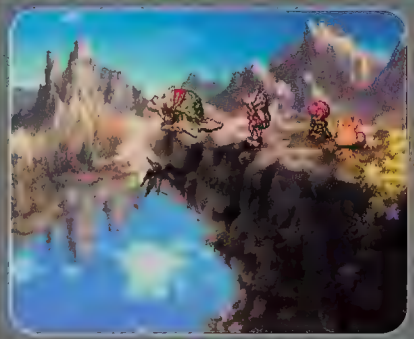
Import Reviews

Oh! Bakyuuun PS	B
Primal Image PS2	D
Sky Surfer PS2	D-
Super Runabout DC	B

Handheld Reviews

Men in Black 2 GBC	C
Metal Gear Solid GBC	A

Game of the Month



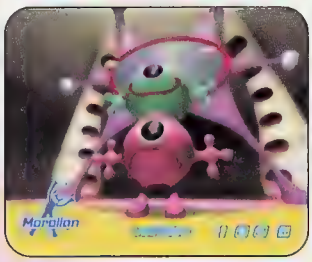
Legend of Mana

developer: square · publisher: ea

Return to the splendor of hand-drawn animation in a game that will captivate you for hours at a time and take you back to those Square days of old. This is one of the reasons why we're so happy that the PS2 is backward compatible. Its appeal is ageless.

SPACE CHANNEL 5

BY DAVE HALVERSON



For a game that is more of a rhythmic celebration than a mind-blowing video-game experience, Sega is respectively giving Space Channel 5 a big push. It's been a long while since Sega of America embraced niche titles from the home office in Japan, so this further proves that the new SOA means business when it comes to appeasing their enthusiast demographic. Now the wonders of Ulala and the dancing aliens can be enjoyed by one and all.

The Morolians have attacked the earth in the far future and forced its citizens to dance, dance, dance. Ulala, the stunning space reporter representing the floundering Space Channel 5, is assigned to the frontlines to out-dance the invaders in order to get Earth's citizens back. To the beats of the catchiest music this side of Planet Claire (it'll haunt you in the shower everyday), your job is to mimic the aliens' moves and zap them on command to win back humans. If you have the skills, you'll have a gigantic entourage following your every move (and man can Ulala move), but if you don't, the music changes to an unhappy tone and you'll be flying solo.

The look of the game is absolutely inspired in terms of design. The backgrounds are all streaming CG and look distinctly space retro, a melding of '70s flare and cool outer-space lines. The timing in the American version seems to have been modified for challenge's sake, and the voices have been dubbed, but this was obviously a high priority localization for Sega. Space Channel 5 is a superb alternative gaming experience. The real life Ulala ain't bad either. **GR**

- THE GREAT JAPANESE SOUNDTRACK IS INTACT!
- INSPIRED DESIGN ALL AROUND ACTION FIGURES WANTED!
- 78 UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS
- IT COULD BE LONGER. SEQUEL PERHAPS?

REPUBLIC SAYS... SC5 IS ONE OF THOSE GAMES YOU JUST HAVE TO PLAY, BECAUSE EVERYONE WILL BE TALKING ABOUT IT. IT'S NOT VERY LONG, BUT WHAT YOU DO GET IS GOLDEN.

B+

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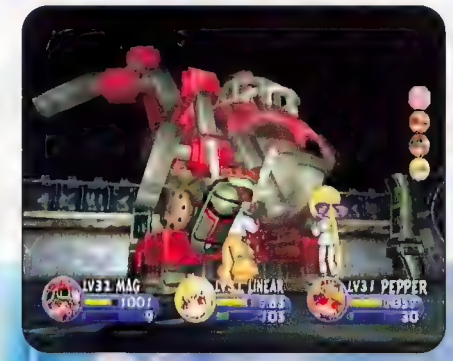
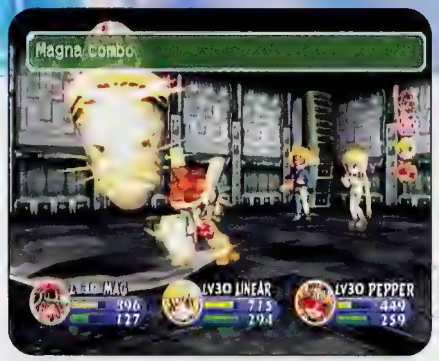
EVOLUTION 2

BY MIKE HOBBS





Charming is the best way to describe the original Evolution. Lighthearted and humorous, the game's cute, very well conceived characters carried players through a simple yet engaging random dungeon RPG adventure that came across quite well in the DC's earlier days.

With Evolution 2, developers Sting have not strayed far from the original's formula, making only subtle changes here and there, keeping the feel of the game firmly entrenched in the style laid down by the first game. It's still very cute and very charming, but this time out, a more involved and complicated story surrounds the returning cast of adventurers, and new, fixed-layout dungeons have been added to the expected mix of randomly generated affairs. However, whether a dungeon is pre-set or random, the play is not all that different in actual practice, and still boils down to level after level of enemies on the way to a boss. While the combat is as appealing and well designed as the first Evolution's, the formula, which was honestly beginning to run out towards the end of the first game, does not hold up quite as well the second time through. Now, the sameness of it all struggles a bit to sustain itself through the length of another game.

But as before, this is a professionally made game, and we don't get to say this very often, also a well-localized game. Characters now speak during cinemas, but no atrocious dubbing has taken place, only faithfully translated subtitles. Bravo, Ubi Soft.

Most of my concerns with Evolution 2 have to do with being a bit tired of its play after the first game, so this will obviously be less of an issue for those who've never played Evolution. And for first-timers, this is a fine little adventure, full of attractive visuals, fun, if repetitious combat-focused gameplay, and of course, charm. However, if there is to be an Evolution 3, it's going to have to evolve substantially, for by then, we will have played Eternal Arcadia, Phantasy Star Online, and Grandia II, all far more ambitious and potentially ground-breaking games. GR

- ALL THE CHARM OF THE FIRST EVOLUTION
- TYPICALLY SOLID PRESENTATION
- SLIGHTLY ENHANCED DUNGEON GRAPHICS
- EVOLUTION FORMULA STARTING TO WEAR THIN

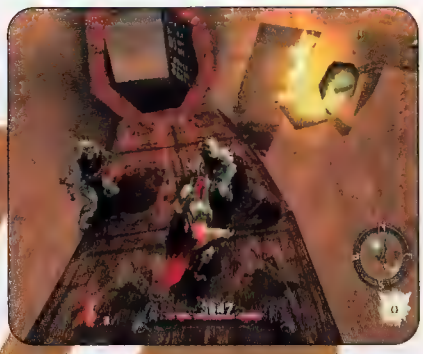
REPUBLICSAYS... I LIKED THE FIRST EVOLUTION, AND EVEN THOUGH EVO 2 IS A DEMONSTRABLY BETTER GAME IN NEARLY EVERY RESPECT, THE GAMEPLAY HAS BECOME SOMEWHAT TIRESOME.

B-

DRACONUS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

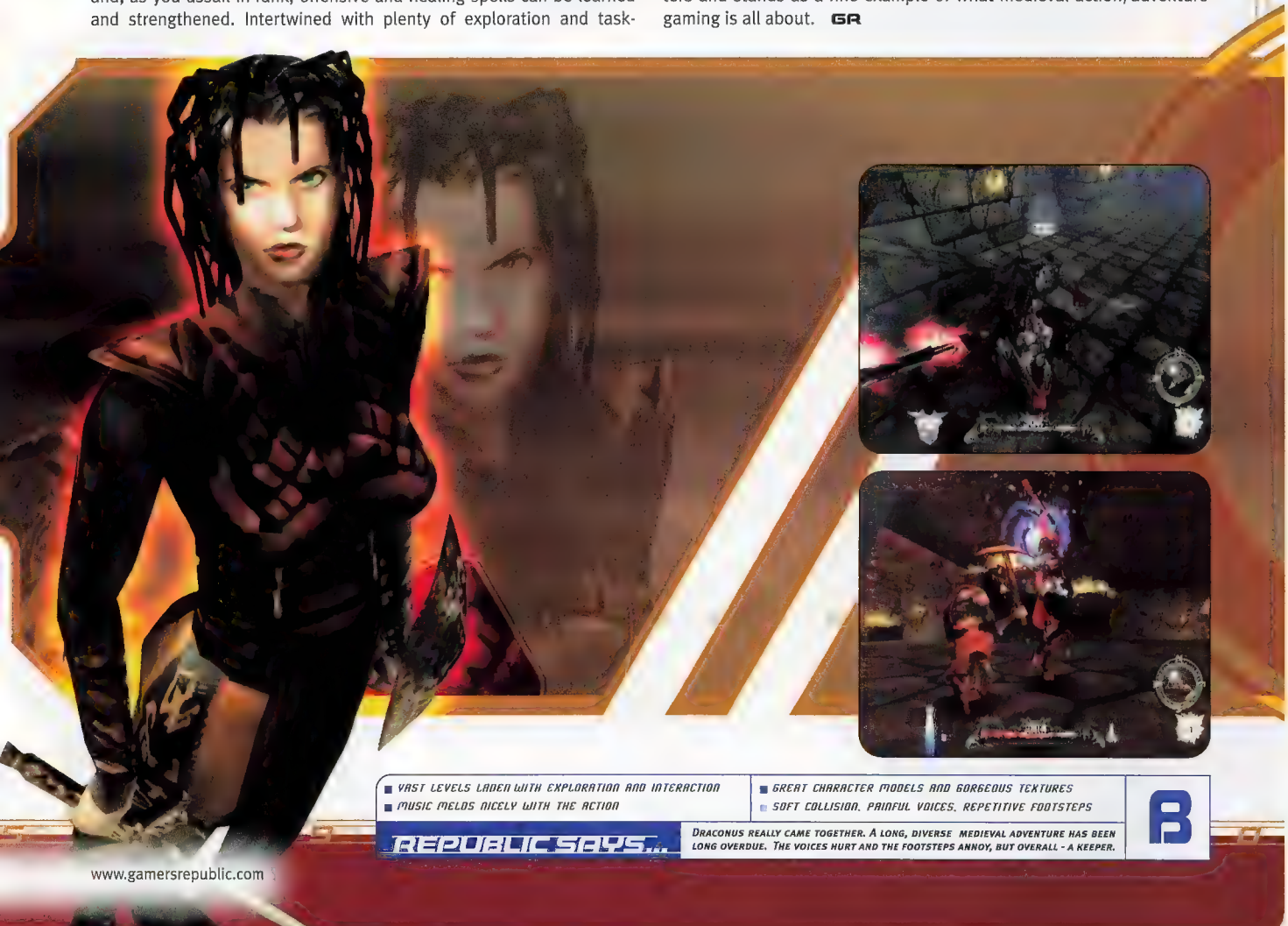
Normally I might have a difficult time overlooking flaws like soft collision and some of the worst voice acting in recorded history, but in Draconus' case, the further I dove into its vast expanses, the less I noticed the flaws were even there. Scrutinizing the first couple of levels, with their simplistic design and architecture, I grew somewhat suspect of this latest endeavor from Treyarch (Tony Hawk DC, Die by the Sword). However, once I embraced the battle mechanism and achieved higher status within the quest, I found myself entrenched in a hearty medieval adventure. The game has a rich, involved storyline (voiced by the now-famous elder who spoke so eloquently to Kain and Raziel) that goes into explicit detail before each scenario, providing lore and backstory relevant to the quest at hand. While the in-game musings, which are accompanied by subtitles if you choose, are *Battlefield Earth* bad, the story itself is quite engaging. Commanded by the mighty wizard Stendahl, as Dragonsbane, the fifth-born child of a king that was a fifth-born child, descendants of a mighty Dragon Slayer, you will be transported through-



out the land as you attempt to unite the shattered kingdom of humanity and slay the vile Dragon Lord. Sounds noble enough, eh? Draconus, the foot soldiers of the Last Dragon, and a whole slew of quests that prepare you for the final battle stand between you and the end of what has thankfully become another formidable adventure for the ever-burgeoning DC library.

The gameplay in Draconus is drenched in elaborate combat and throws a wide variety of skillfully modeled enemies your way, from ogres to trolls to dwarves to just about any other gothic fiend you can think of. And while there is no lock on feature ala Soul Reaver, the camera follows along quite nicely (keep the Dramamine close by, though), as the combatants swirl around in battle. With your shield, you can block opponents' attacks and, of course, counter with a few moves of your own. As the action intensifies, combos can be used for maximum bludgeoning and, as you assail in rank, offensive and healing spells can be learned and strengthened. Intertwined with plenty of exploration and task-based scenarios, Draconus is deeply diverse in terms of not only gameplay, but environments as well. The levels are, for the most part, greatly expansive, with nary a sign of clipping, and generously littered with arteries and side quests. From castle keeps and caves to mines, catacombs, crumbling ruins, and a variety of well-designed outer regions, each is laden with snorting beasts and realistically modeled forts and structures. The music in the game, which nimbly drifts in and out of the action, brings about an air of conviction and mystery, as do the cleverly devised sound effects which, outside of the annoying and simplistic footstep sample (which suspiciously never changes), are very good.

Draconus, like Nightmare Creatures 2, is somewhat of a slow burn, and has its share of minor miscues, but as it builds it succeeds in drawing you into its world—which by the end of the game, you wish would just keep on evolving. It's well worth playing through with both characters and stands as a fine example of what medieval action/adventure gaming is all about. **GR**



- VAST LEVELS LADEN WITH EXPLORATION AND INTERACTION
- MUSIC MELDS NICELY WITH THE ACTION
- GREAT CHARACTER MODELS AND GORGEOUS TEXTURES
- SOFT COLLISION, PAINFUL VOICES, REPETITIVE FOOTSTEPS

REPUBLIC SAYS...

DRACONUS REALLY CAME TOGETHER. A LONG, DIVERSE MEDIEVAL ADVENTURE HAS BEEN LONG OVERDUE. THE VOICES HURT AND THE FOOTSTEPS ANNOY, BUT OVERALL - A KEEPER.

B

GAUNTLET LEGENDS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

One of the most enduring video game series ever, Gauntlet has survived several incarnations, from its roots in the arcade, through the 8- and 16-bit ranks, back to the arcade and then out again, covering all of today's major platforms. And seeing as how so many renowned series are being shelved these days in lieu of quantity over quality, Midway deserves respect for consistently nurturing the game's simplistic mechanics while adhering to the catalyst that made it a hit in the first place.

The recipe for success with each passing version of Gauntlet has always been the obvious graphical and audible innovations that each new platform brings, along with improved multiplayer capabilities. This latest adaptation, however, while excelling in both of these areas, writes a new chapter into Gauntlet tradition. Not only is it visually by far the best Gauntlet yet, but it also (finally) provides a worthy one-player quest. Previous reviews labeling Gauntlet Legends as repetitious couldn't be further from the truth. Based on the diversity in the characters alone, I find this hard to fathom. With sorceresses, warriors, jesters, elfs, dwarves, and wizards available to do your bidding, much of how the game unfolds is based on your choice of fighter alone. Now factor in the puzzle elements littered throughout each locale triggered by an array of hidden doors and switches, along with each tower's gargantuan guardian and an unforgettable soundtrack, and it's fairly evident that the old mouse-in-a-maze game of Gauntlet is now a distant memory.

The overall look on Dreamcast is respectable to say the least. While certain areas have richer textures than others, for the most part each is finely crafted and dripping with detail. There are plenty of pause-worthy moments when entire encampments come into view, and the tiered environments are littered with all sorts of ornate 2D and 3D eye candy: fresh hanging cadavers leak blood in the torture chambers while elsewhere skeletons dangle in the cages they rotted in; trees have dimension, rivers flow, water ripples, and fires blaze. As fitting, the music and sound effects are tailor-made for each setting.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 139 ▸

- GOOD MIX OF CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES
- GREAT SOUNDTRACK
- PUZZLE ELEMENTS KEEP IT INTERESTING
- PLAYING SOLO, THE BOSSES ARE A ROYAL PAIN

REPUBLIC SAYS... I'M SHOCKED I LIKED GAUNTLET LEGENDS AS MUCH AS I DID. FOR AN ARCADE PORT, I FOUND IT REMARKABLY WELL ROUNDED. A SOLID SINGLE OR MULTIPLAYER GAME.

B

THREADS OF FATE

BY J.R. HAUGEN

Threads of Fate is the story of two notably different characters. The first is Mint, the adorable pig-tailed trouble-maker, and the other is Rue, an inscrutable little fellow who always leaves you wondering. Their goal is the same, which is to find an ancient relic, but their reasons are certainly not: Mint wants it so she can overthrow her princess sister and take over the world, while Rue wants it to be reunited with his lost love. Their paths, however, are linked together, intertwining at points, hence the name, Threads of Fate.

Regardless of which character you choose at the start of the game, the actual levels you play through will stay the same, with the exception of a couple of character-specific dungeons, but the storylines will differ greatly. On Mint's side, the game is lighthearted and generally humorous, while Rue's thread is definitely more somber. The control for either character is tight and fluid, moving you around in a 2D/3D environment. Both Rue and Mint have magical abilities, the former's being the ability to morph into the creatures he defeats, and the latter choosing from a variety of elemental magic spells.

The gameplay is straightforward and, combined with the smooth, clean graphics, makes for a very enjoyable game. There isn't very much in the way of puzzle-solving, but it moves along at a steady enough pace to keep you interested. There is a wide assortment of monsters, and the bosses are, for the most part, large and foreboding. This isn't a game for the hardcore action/RPG player, however; there is only one town in the whole game, and the quests for both characters are fairly simple.

Regardless, Threads of Fate works if you're just in the mood for a simplistically fun game or as an introduction to the genre. The character designs are endearing and the dialog is sure to keep a smile on your face. This isn't the type of game you'd expect from Square, but that doesn't mean it fails to satisfy. GR

- ESSENTIALLY TWO GAMES IN ONE
- MINT IS A WONDERFUL MAIN CHARACTER
- CRISP, CLEAN GRAPHICS NOT USUALLY SEEN ON PLAYSTATION
- NOT AS INVOLVED AS A NORMAL RPG

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THREADS OF FATE HAS THE SKELETAL STRUCTURE OF AN ACTION-RPG, BUT IT'S MISSING THE JUICY INSIDES. STILL, QUITE A FUN GAME.

B-

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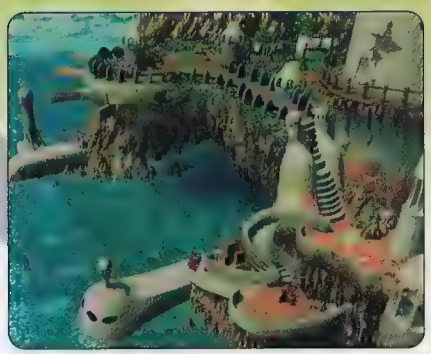


The PlayStation continues to reign as the champion of RPGs with Legend of Dragoon. The latest Sony epic boasts awesome visuals and electrifying action

LEGEND OF DRAGOON

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

We've all heard the hype for Legend of Dragoon. Four CDs, hundreds of programmers, thousands upon thousands of hours of work. There's no questioning the amount of effort that went into Sony's latest RPG. The question is, "Did the effort pay off?" Fortunately for RPG fans everywhere, the answer is a resounding yes, even though Dragoon has its share of faults.

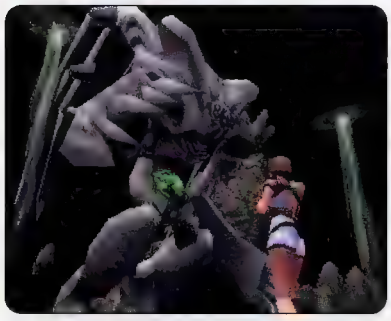
As soon as you turn on Legend of Dragoon, you'll be struck by its visual majesty. Much like another popular PlayStation RPG, Dragoon features beautiful prerendered backgrounds populated by polygon characters. The background work is right up there with Square's best, delivering incredibly detailed cityscapes, forests, caverns and fortresses. The game is full of animations that bring each scene to life, be they sparkling rays of light, insects buzzing about, or reflections dancing on a riverbank. The gorgeous water effect is pure magic, better than any similar effect yet attempted on Dreamcast or PS2. A few scenes feature so much animation and detail they could be momentarily mistaken for FMV. In battle, the game switches to full polygonal mode, which isn't as showstopping as the prerendered maps but looks awfully good just the same. The character models look as good as what you'll find in any RPG, though the textures are a bit weak.

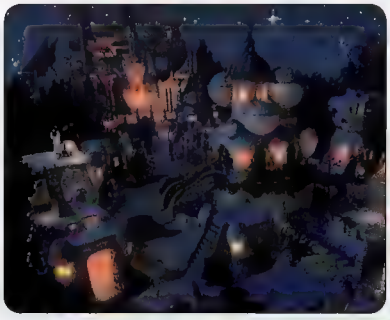
While some RPGs have combat that will make you doze off, you'll never find yourself bored with battles in Legend of Dragoon. Though the fights are turn-based and menu-driven, the game uses a system called "addition" attacks that let you score extra hits by timing extra button presses as you strike your enemy—up to seven hits in some cases. Magic items are interactive, too, with rapid button-mashing causing the items to deliver an extra punch. Forget those sleep-inducing battles from other games: every battle in Dragoon is involving and interesting, and the system actually rewards players for having some level of skill. Then there are the dragoon powers. A few hours into the game you'll start acquiring magic stones that let your characters change into dragoon form (that's the combination of a human with a dragon spirit), thus gaining all-new attacks and the ability to cast elemental spells. It would have been convenient if you could better control the dragoon form (you can't change back until your power runs out, nor can you use items or defend while transformed), but it adds a cool and very useful extra dimension to gameplay.

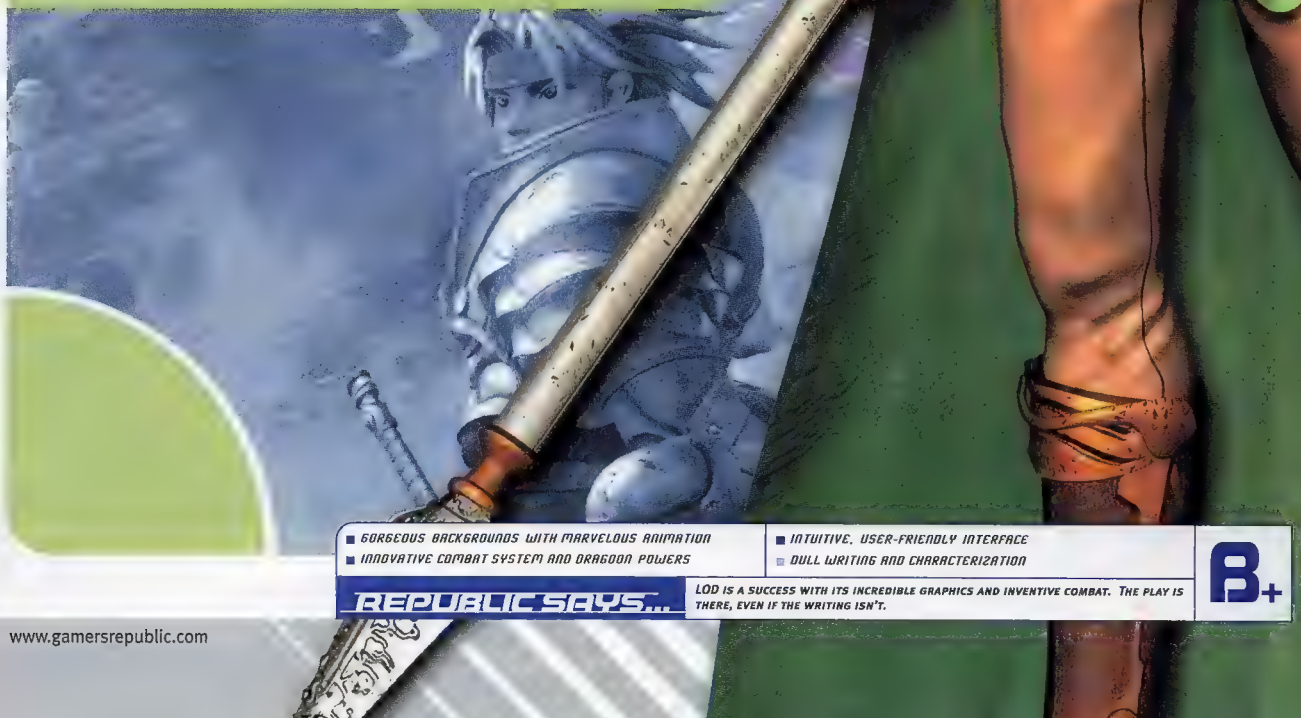
It's too bad the writing and characterization—some of the most important elements in an RPG—don't quite stack up to the visuals and gameplay. Dialogue seems awkward and forced (occasionally even out of place), and for the most part the main characters can be described

with a single word that describes every action they take (Rose is mysterious, Meru is immature, etc.). The actual storyline is fine, as the main character, the revenge-minded Dart, returns home from a long journey to find his village destroyed and his cute non-girlfriend Shana captured, thus thrusting him into the midst of a civil war that turns out to be part of a much larger plot. Later in the game, some surprising twists actually add depth to a few characters and make the tale truly intriguing, but it'll take hours of play for this reward.

What Dragoon lacks in its writing, it makes up for with its user-friendly interface. There's no funky junction system that requires a textbook to learn: just buy your weapons and equipment and off you go. There's no tedious experience-building either, as the game is paced so you'll always be ready for the next challenge. Other touches, like optional indicators that show each scene's exits and warn of impending attacks, go a long way too. If only the inventory weren't so small, I'd say Dragoon has the best interface ever made. Still, Sony's attention to little details, both in gameplay and graphics, makes Legend of Dragoon ideal for first-time RPG players and provides hours of fun for role-playing vets. We've got another fine epic for the PlayStation. GR



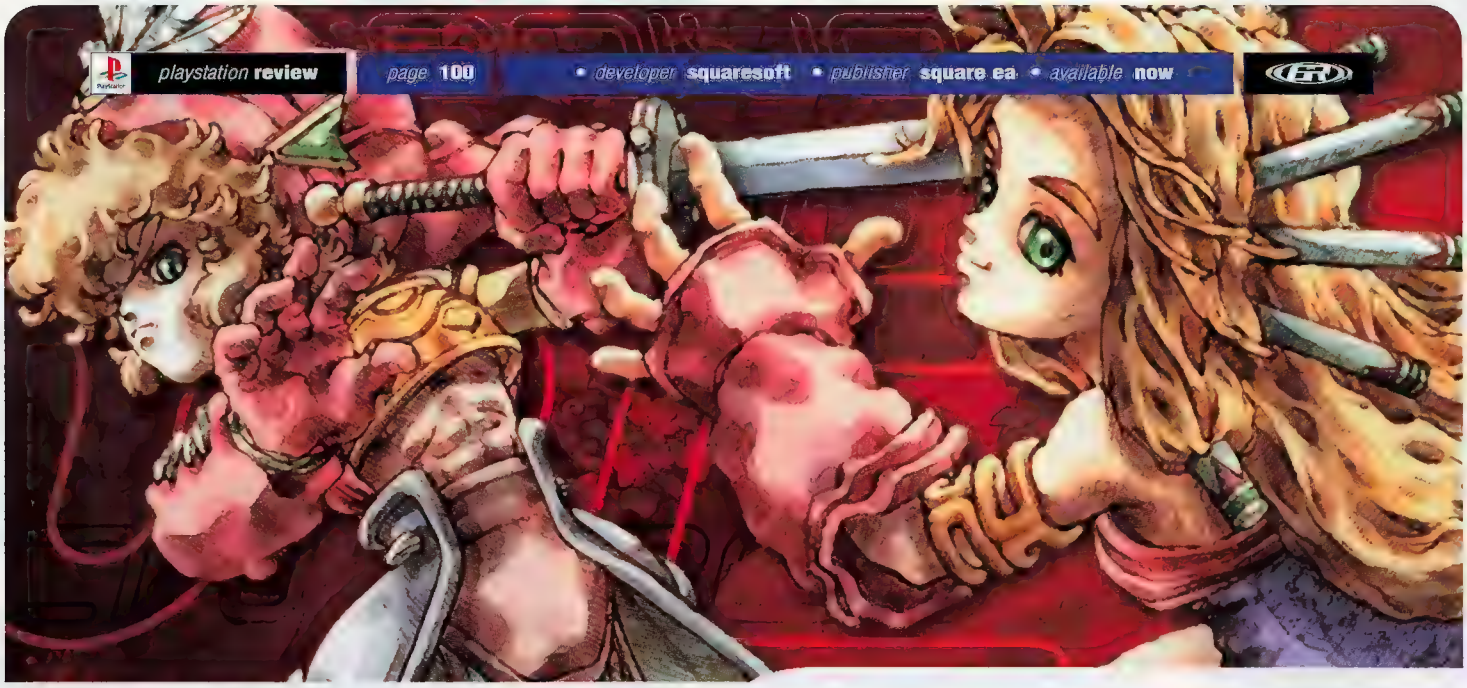




- GORGEOUS BACKGROUNDS WITH MARVELOUS ANIMATION
- INNOVATIVE COMBAT SYSTEM AND DRAGOON POWERS
- INTUITIVE, USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE
- DULL WRITING AND CHARACTERIZATION

REPUBLICSAYS... LOD IS A SUCCESS WITH ITS INCREDIBLE GRAPHICS AND INVENTIVE COMBAT. THE PLAY IS THERE, EVEN IF THE WRITING ISN'T.

B+



LEGEND OF MANA

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Magical." It's the first word that comes to mind when playing Legend of Mana. "Gorgeous," "awe-inspiring," and "wondrous" quickly follow. Continuing the Seiken Densetsu series that last graced the U.S. in 1993, Legend of Mana brings players back to a fantastic action-RPG world full of artistry and adventure.

Most striking about Legend of Mana is its incredible hand-drawn visuals. The whimsical scenery looks like a beautifully illustrated storybook: every character and background is painstakingly detailed, bursting with life and color. Amazing characters like talking mountains and walking fish immediately bring forth images of movies like *The Neverending Story* or *The Dark Crystal*. These interactive works of art are rivaled only by SaGa Frontier II.

The lush graphics are backed by pure fun gameplay. RPG-style character interaction and exploration is backed by real-time battles that play like classic hack-'n'-slash side-scrollers. Players can choose from tons of weapons and learn a wealth of special abilities to take apart the enemies, plus a second character (with optional 2P control) sometimes joins the fun, as does a helpful pet. I can't think of any RPG with a more enjoyable battle system.

Instead of taking the epic adventure path of its predecessors, Legend of Mana takes an episodic approach that spans nearly 70 quests. The stories can overlap and occasionally intertwine for some level of continuity, but for the most part are individual episodes linked only by the fact that completing one may open the way to a new quest or a new land. On one hand, this makes the game extremely non-linear, but on the other, you can spend a lot of time not knowing what to do next, plus

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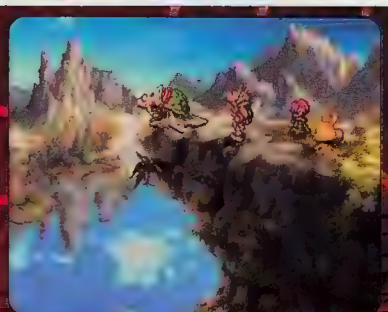


- AWESOME 2D GRAPHICS AND BEAUTIFUL MUSIC
- EXCELLENT REAL-TIME BATTLES FOR 2 PLAYERS
- TONS OF QUESTS TO GO ON
- NO COHESIVE STORY

REPUBLICSAYS... REAL-TIME CUTSCENES? 3D GRAPHICS? WHO NEEDS 'EM WHEN A GAME LOOKS, SOUNDS AND PLAYS AS GOOD AS THIS.

A-

RHAPSODY

BY J.R. HAUGEN

A brilliantly colorful musical adventure with a touch of humor.

Rhapsody challenges role-playing convention

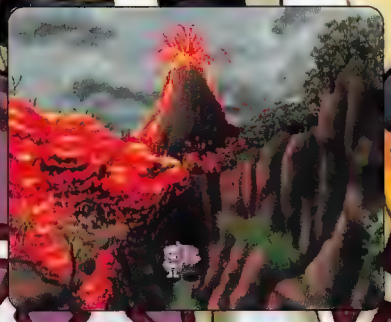
Rhapsody is quite the unusual RPG. All the main characters are either girls or puppets, your weapon is a musical instrument, and there are multiple song-and-dance sequences reminiscent of a Disney cartoon. If you're looking for a more lighthearted RPG than what you're used to, Rhapsody is definitely one you'll want.

This is the story of a young girl named Cornet, who has the unique ability to talk to puppets, many of whom you convince to join your party. All the girls in Marl's Kingdom swoon over Prince Ferdinand, but Cornet is the lucky pauper who wins his heart. Just as they are about to kiss, the bouncy witch Marjoly swoops in to spoil everything, accidentally turning the prince to stone and kidnapping him. Cornet takes her puppet squad to find her love, and the quest unfolds from there.

The visuals in Rhapsody approach Legend of Mana in hand-drawn quality. As a bonus, you find illustrations in the game that unlock wonderful artwork which you can access through the main menu. Another fun addition is the ability to choose between the Japanese and English orchestral soundtracks at any time during the game.

You can't have your cake and eat it too, because the gameplay is extremely simplified. But you can use the amazing cake attack, in addition to attacks that crush your enemies with pancakes, sugar candy, and flan. Yes, a flan attack. There are no fireballs from the sky, no gigantic titans coming from the earth, just megalithic pieces of food that drop down to smite your foes.

My first impression of Rhapsody was that it would only appeal to children, girls, or first-time RPG-players, but having played through it, it is even more entertaining for the hardcore gamer. If the Final Fantasies and Legend of Dragoons of the world are Emmy-winning hour-long dramas, then Rhapsody is the hilarious half-hour sitcom. Truly a bright addition to the ever-growing American crop of role-playing games. **GR**



- INCLUSION OF SUPERIOR JAPANESE SOUNDTRACK
- MAKES YOU LAUGH IN ALMOST EVERY SCENE
- MAY TURN OFF FANS OF MORE SULLEN RPGS
- LEANS HEAVILY TOWARD THE EASY SIDE

REPUBLIC SAYS... RHAPSODY MAY NOT BE A FOUR-CD EPIC, BUT IT STILL PROVIDES A GOOD AMOUNT OF ENTERTAINMENT VALUE FOR YOUR DOLLAR.

B-

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PS2 PlayStation Dreamcam NINTENDO64

DEEP FIGHTER

review by pooch • dev: criterion studios • pub: ubi soft • avail: now

D

I went to the hospital this past weekend and told the doctor that I was having acute pains, simultaneously, in my stomach, head and chest. He said, "Have you been playing Deep Fighter for Dreamcast?" I said, "Wow! That's amazing, yes I have. How did you know?" He said, "You're the tenth person I've seen like this today." I said, "But doc, the game isn't even out yet!" He said, "Yes, I know...that's the scary part."

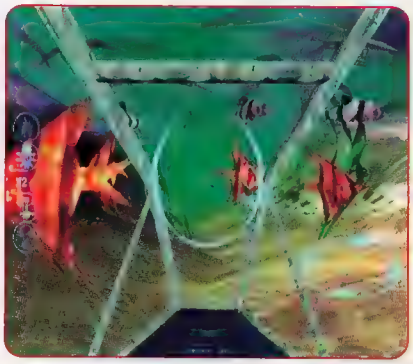
Probably the single most inane aspect of Deep Fighter is that after the single life bar of the ship is depleted, you are sent to the start-up screen and have to reload the game all over again. It just seems completely unnatural and, quite frankly, adds to the overall unattractiveness of the game.

Deep Fighter plays like G-Police, but underwater and not nearly as action packed. The ships are specially equipped submarine fighters, and, although this concept is good, these missions are extremely boring: wanting to shoot the fish that are harmlessly swimming by seems to be the only respite from the tedium.

In its favor, the underwater graphics are quite beautiful, especially in the look of the fish and the vegetation. But it just doesn't ease the pain. It only made me think that this might be what Sega's recently announced video aquariums look like.

Not only are there real actors (Night Trap flashback!) in the FMV scenes, but they also break the fourth wall and talk directly to you. Sometimes the music plays, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes the voice of the commander is heard when the text of the next directive is displayed, sometimes it isn't. The game's scale is off too: When having to tow something and the camera pulls out to third-person perspective, the submarine becomes dwarfed and even the fish swimming by are giants.

And as I left the doctor's office, I asked, "Doc, is there anything I can do?" He said, "No, you've already been infected. The best you can do is warn others so that it doesn't spread." GR

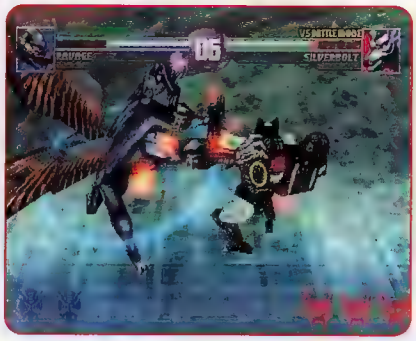


TRANSFORMERS BEAST WARS: TRANSMETALS

review by c. hoffman • dev: wave edge • pub: bam entertainment • avail: now

PlayStation B-

The Beast Wars continue to rage on the PlayStation. Even though this 3D projectile-based fighting game isn't particularly deep, it has a lot of nice features that make it fun. Players can choose from more than eight popular characters, each one nicely textured and backed by the ability to transform into robot, beast and vehicles modes. Other features include 10 arenas full of interactive elements and environmental hazards, a story mode that lets you play either the good guys or bad guys, and a gallery mode. Top-notch CG scenes and voice acting straight from the TV show add to the appeal. GR



GEKIDO

review by b. fiechter • dev: n.a.p.s. team • pub: interplay • avail: now

PlayStation D

There's still that lingering hope that an inspired beat-'em-up will bring relief to an endless genre drought, but then a game like Gekido comes along and makes you wonder if the skies haven't shut down for good. Following the inauspicious path of Fighting Force, Gekido mechanically attempts to direct the Final Fight and Streets of Rage formula into a 3D perspective, failing to even produce an average throwback to one of the more basic design ideas from old-school gaming. The action is interminable, the confrontations with the automatons are perfunctory, the implementation of the most rudimentary of ideas is sloppy and inept, and there is an overall quality of careless craftsmanship.

The plot: It would seem that there is a really bad leader of a really bad gang of thugs out there and you must punch and kick and shoot and punch and kick and shoot your way through too few gritty urban environments, find some weapons and break some stuff. Unlock a couple new characters and an arena where you can battle one-on-one, and you'll find an even more poorly conceived part of the game.

Even if Gekido worked on a gameplay level, the music is so out of place that the game becomes unsalvageable. Repetitive Fatboy Slim remixes and Apartment 27 industrial rock grind against the sound effects and settings, creating a friction that wears down a bad game to intolerable. GR

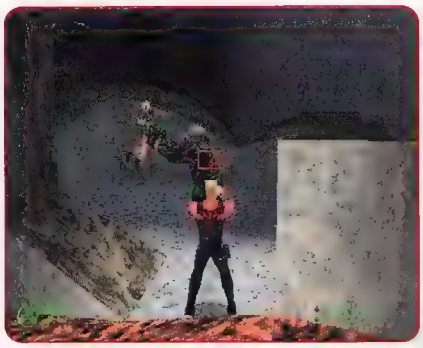
DUKE NUKEM: PLANET OF THE BABES

review by c. hoffman • dev: 3D realms • pub: gt interactive • avail: now

PlayStation C-

Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes isn't just a gratuitous T&A fest for easily aroused males; it's a poor game, too. If you played Duke's last PS adventure, you know what to expect—lots of shooting and exploration elements fill the game's 14 levels. But this third-person adventure is riddled with problems like heavy clipping, a choppy frame rate, poor collision detection and unintuitive controls. Strafing is pointless (Duke moves like a slug in winter) and even simple things like swinging hand-over-hand are chores.

I appreciate the number of weapons, the level design and the puzzle aspects of the game, but not enough to have fun with Duke. On top of the game's other problems, the sexist Duke, with his lame one-liners and poor Clint Eastwood impression, is a character that, quite simply, needs to be put to rest. GR



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DIGIMON WORLD

review by jr haugen • dev: bandai • pub: bandai • avail: now

PlayStation **C-**

It's safe to say that Digimon will always be the Go-Bots to Pokémon's Transformers. You can say what you want about either one, but the fact remains that the latter is what won over the hearts of children everywhere. In the case of each franchise's video games, you can also say that Pokémon is superior.

In this Digimon game, you are a Digimon trainer, who has been transported to Digimon Island to collect all the Digimon living there. You run into battles with other Digimon, after which you capture them, but you also must take care of them when they're walking around with you—very much like a virtual pet. If it's hungry, you feed it, if it's sleepy, you put it to bed, and when a little bubble with fecal matter appears, you must take it to the bathroom lest it lay a steaming mess on the ground. I kid you not; it's quite graphic.

Speaking of graphics, they tend to be choppy, and the control is also poor, begging for the use of analog input. It's really hard to sit down and play this game for longer than ten minutes at a time; this is suited only for Digimon fanatics or kids who don't know any better. **GR**

SURF RIDERS

review by t. stratton • dev/pub: ubi soft • avail: july

PlayStation **C**

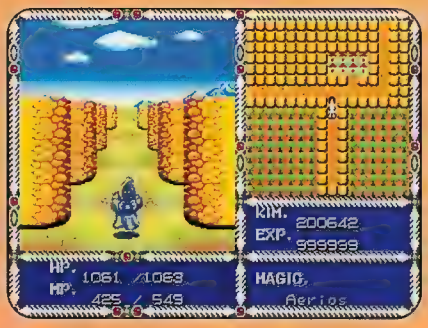
It appears that the sports genre has gotten a swift kick in the boogie board. Well, sort of. It's no secret that sports titles generate the bulk of video-game sales, only now companies are starting to really support non-traditional sports. Surf Riders is a perfect example. Not only will the game be the first surfing titles for the PS, but it will be the only surf title on any home console since the NES days.

And Ubi Soft has pulled no punches to build a game that closely resembles the real thing. Acquiring the A.S.P. license (Association of Surfing Professionals), Surf Riders offers 16 wave warriors to finesse waves of different degree and difficulty. Surfers can snake in and out of "the tube," carving tight water sprays and even pulling some awesome aerials, though learning to do much other than keeping balance on the board is fairly difficult. The controls are simple enough, it is just learning the right timing to execute advanced moves that can become frustrating.

Visuals are sharp, simple and rather effective. Waves take on different shades of color depending on location, weather and time of day. Overall, the neat package Surf Riders provides delivers a good degree of unique entertainment. It doesn't push any new play mechanics or innovative visuals, yet still manages to keep the player trying to carve out gnarly lines. **GR**

SWORD OF VERMILION

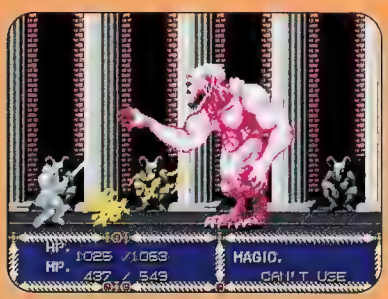
[publisher] sega
[genre] role playing
[system] genesis
[year] 1990

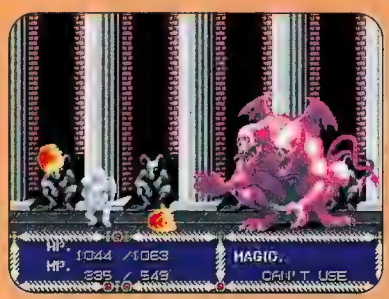


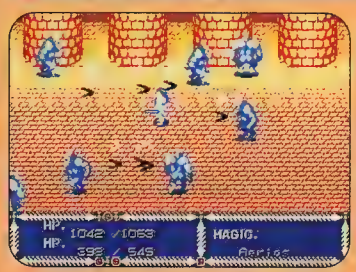
The state of video games a decade ago was far different from what it is today. The 16-bit era hadn't even left the nest yet and 2D platformers pretty much dominated the market. The availability of RPGs was a far cry from what it is today, so it's no surprise that Sword of Vermilion stood out among the rest. Amazingly, the game remains fresh to this day. Before AM2 was AM2 and before Yu Suzuki was redefining the RPG with Shenmue, they attempted to set trends with Sword of Vermilion. The game was and is fantastic, and it's surprising why first there was no sequel made, and second why more RPGs didn't imitate it in one way or another.

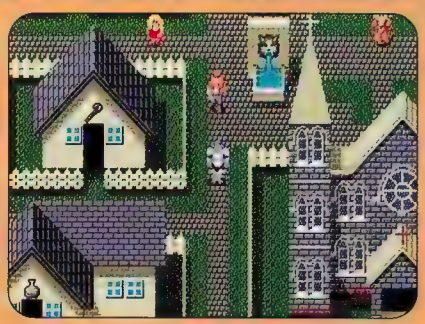
As far as the plot goes, Vermilion is guilty of severe unoriginality (you discover you're a prince, and adventure to defeat the evil ruler Tsarkon, etc.), but it excels in most other aspects, most notably the music. Never before and few times since has a game's score enveloped me in the game's universe; this game should be required playing in your Introduction to Video Game Music class. Whether you're in a town that has been decimated or lost in a cave without a light source, the music reflects it. It's so good that even the hint book that comes with the game (this was back when Sega liked to include 100-plus-page hint books with its RPGs) gives you specific instructions for recording the soundtrack onto a cassette tape.

Walking around in towns is like it normally is in an RPG, but battles and world travel are handled quite differently. When you exit a village, the screen is broken up into three windows, one showing a first-person view, the second showing an overhead-map view, and the third showing your vital statistics. The map view will only show you a few squares around you unless you obtain the area map somewhere, which illuminates the whole 16x16 block screen. After a few steps, you will inevitably run into a battle, where instead of menu-flipping in turn-based combat, you fully control your character while whacking away with your sword. Many times you start out surrounded by as many as eight enemies, who quickly close in on you. Throw in how easy it is to get poisoned, and it makes for a very challenging experience.







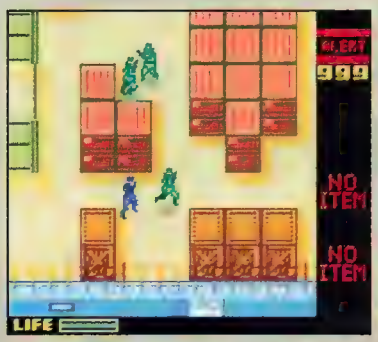


Sword of Vermilion's unique approach to role-playing seems to have been forgotten, but if you can get your hands on a copy, or emulate it, it's definitely worth a go. It's one of those games that will treat you very badly in the beginning, but you get rewarded for your toil by the time it's over. **-J.R. HAUGEN**

EXILES
<<retro video game assimilation>>
gr001
www.gamersrepublic.com

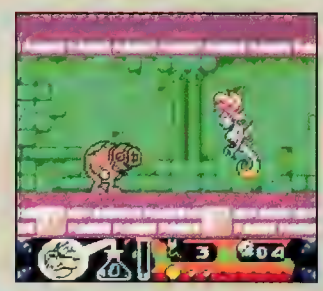
PORTABLE GAMING ANALYSIS GAMES MOBILIZED

metal gear solid dev: kcej • pub: konami • avail: now reviewed by c. hoffman The legendary Metal Gear Solid lives on well on Game Boy Color. Don't be fooled by the game's small size; it's every bit as fun as its classic 32-bit cousin. Yeah, the graphics have taken a hit, especially with the small characters, but the animation is superb and I can't imagine an 8-bit Metal Gear game looking better than this. Naturally there aren't any dynamic real-time cutscenes, but the hand-drawn intermissions do the job. Don't be fooled by Metal Gear's title either. Even though it shares its name with the PlayStation adventure, MGS on Game Boy is a full-blown remake with new levels and new enemies, but the same great "tactical espionage action" gameplay. As always, Solid Snake is on a top-secret mission with the ultimate goal of destroying the walking nuclear tank called Metal Gear, and he's got to rely on skill and sneakiness to do it. All the sneaking, hiding and distracting that were such a hit on PS have survived remarkably intact. Snake can scoot along walls, do the belly crawl through ventilation ducts, and even peek around corners. His arsenal is all here, too—pistol, grenades, guided missiles, gas mask, infrared goggles and lots more. Snake still packs his cigs, but they're euphemistically called "foggers," and the infamous cardboard box is back (and very useful) as well. MGS also has a great cast of characters, including Snake's new female co-star, Chris Jenner, and some great villains that make up the Black Chamber mercenary group, as well as some Metal Gear faves like Mei Ling. They're all backed with brilliant, mature characterization that rivals any RPG, even though conversations can drag at times. MGS really has it all – great gameplay, a vast arsenal, superb writing, and even music and control that are surprisingly nice. Metal Gear isn't only one of the best Game Boy games ever; it's an awesome game, period. **A**



men in black 2 dev: david palmer productions • pub: crave • avail: now reviewed by c. hoffman At first I was annoyed by many aspects of Men in Black 2: The control config is inconvenient, the game has some cheap hits and cheaper deaths, and hit detection is quirky at times. When I adjusted to these problems, I found MIB2 to be decent, though not very inspired. As the Men in Black, players have to go through eight levels of standard run-jump-shoot play, gathering four pairs of sunglasses (don't ask why) before opening the exit and possibly fighting a boss. That's really about it, except for the occasional power-up and a few minor puzzles to figure out, plus a bit of nifty parallax scrolling. Not too bad, but not really good either. **C**

toonsylvania dev: rfx interactive • pub: ubi soft • avail: june previewed by c. hoffman The animated show *Toonsylvania* is coming to the Game Boy Color and bringing with it loads of traditional 2D platforming. As Igor, players get to run, jump and climb their way through the game's five haunted worlds, including a garden, a cemetery and hell itself. The non-linear levels have players exploring to find switches and icons as they battle spiders, ghosts, bats and other assorted creeps. In every level, Igor needs to obtain new power-up suits like a helicopter hat or a diving outfit, and the action gets a bit strategic when you have to learn where to use each power, providing more depth than the usual platformer.



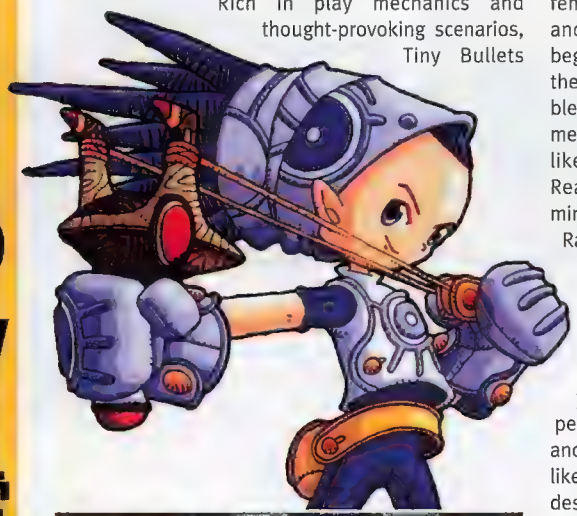
WORLD REPUBLIC

[i] *Ah, the joys of Japan. Nowhere else could sky surfing, taking pictures of scantily clad women, and driving a bus become a video game.*

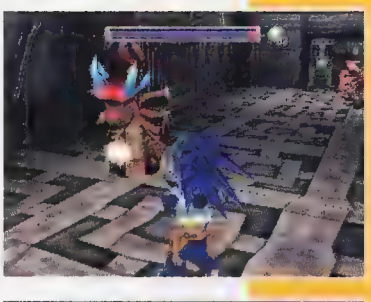
World Republic Review • developer **contrail** • publisher **scei** • available in japan **now**

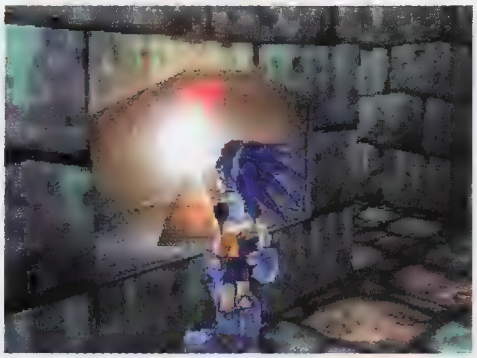
Tiny Bullets

Contrail, makers of Tail Concerto and most recently Alundra 2, continue their roll by proving once again that they are a force to be reckoned with among the ever-burgeoning stable of Japanese PS (and hopefully soon, PS2) developers. Their latest offering, a sleeper of an action-platform-puzzler that we had no expectations for, is the freshest game to call the PlayStation home since Ape Escape. This is the kind of game we'd love to be playing on our PS2s.



Rich in play mechanics and thought-provoking scenarios, Tiny Bullets begins after a portion of the Earth—around a place aptly named Mt. Curse—is split open by a sudden explosion from which a mysterious castle emerges. Trapped within a deep ravine and the chambers that link to the castle, our heroine—Horin, a scrappy young female with Sonic-style hair and a high-tech slingshot—begins her quest. Lucky for us, the fine folks at Contrail have blessed her with a bevy of play mechanics. Tiny Bullets plays like a cross between Soul Reaver, Ape Escape and a miniature version of what Tomb Raider should have ultimately evolved to. After the prerequisite tutorial level—an introduction to Horin's 16 basic functions—you soon find yourself discovering keys and other devices to operate transport mechanisms, manipulating cubes a´la Soul Reaver, performing Lara-style platforming stunts (and lots of them), and shooting your slingshot via a first-person cam exactly like the one in Ape Escape. Considering that the character designs are the stuff licensing dreams are made of, the music is trance-inducing, and the game design is on par with the very best PS adventure fare, Tiny Bullets has "localize me" written all over it.





Even though the PS2 is drawing near, the PlayStation, now at its peak, is still where the games are. Until game developers come to grips with the PS2's complex tools, games like Tiny Bullet, played on the new hardware with the texture smoothing option on, will not only help bridge the gap, but make you temporarily forget there is one. Polished production, excellent CG, ingenious boss encounters—it's all here. I guess now it's just a matter of who, when and what they'll call it. Just remember who called it...again. **-dave halverson**

B+

tiny bullets © sony 2000.

World Republic
Monthly Import Game Reviews
ワールド リパブリック
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IMPORT GAME REVIEWS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM
WORLD REPUBLIC ELECTRONICS
WR電気製品
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World Republic Review • developer climax • publisher sega • available in japan now

SUPER RUNABOUT

One of the great things about certain video games is that they let you do what you can only dream of in reality. Case in point is Climax Entertainment's Super Runabout for Dreamcast, a game where wanton destruction is the norm, and also the point. In this high-powered sequel to the PlayStation's Runabout series, mission-based driving gains a solid new entry, though the game can't match Crazy Taxi's arcade-bred intensity and graphical polish.

Set in San Francisco, Super Runabout earns accolades first of all for presenting the city with a fair amount of accuracy in appearance, if not detail (ever heard of Lombard Street?). And the play area within the city itself is huge and densely populated with other cars, pedestrians, and numerous objects just begging to be crashed into. Indeed, a big part of the game's appeal is the cathartic destruction that takes place while carrying out the game's amusingly conceived missions. Crashing into a water truck, for example, not only sends the vehicle careening through the environment, but also unleashes a load of water bottles that scatter and add to the chaos—quite satisfying and fun, and impressive in the way the game handles the physics of all the objects colliding in the environment. But there is a price to be paid in that the graphics are a little rough around the edges, as is the frame rate, which falters now and again. Also, the collision misbehaves on occasion, understandable considering the sort of madness that can occur, but it's still a little disheartening when polygonal objects collide and mesh when they shouldn't.

The level of fun inherent in the destruction overcomes the game's technical shortcomings however, as do the missions. There's little doubt that this is a Japanese creation when one is tasked with collecting the ingredients of hot dogs by crashing into hot dog stands, or when players must drive a bus through the city, picking up the nine members of a major league baseball team. The dozen or so missions are fun and easy, and this gives the game a light and playful feeling that unfortunately doesn't serve it so well in the long run, although unlocking secret vehicles adds a little to the replayability.

Super Runabout may not have the skill-based depth of Crazy Taxi, nor its tight control, but the game is a lot of fun, and a great way to vent some road rage on some unsuspecting polygons. **-M. HOBBS**

B

super runabout © sega 2000.

World Republic Interview with super runabout producer by tatsuki miura

CLIMAX' KAN NAITO

GR: Super Runabout will finally be released on May 25. What was the hardest thing about developing SR?

KN: Well, the hardest thing was that I had to eat instant food for a few months [laughs]. Anyway, the large map that realizes the city of San Francisco was the most complex bit. Also, it was hard to maximize the Dreamcast's VRAM.

GR: What are the significant points of Super Runabout?

KN: The most significant thing is that we are maximizing the DC's capacity with such a large map, precise graphics, and physics in car movement. Especially in physics: I'm sure that the car movement in SR is at the top level among other racing titles. Compared with Crazy Taxi, it is hard to control the car, but it is more realistic. As a result, you can enjoy the same kind of feeling that a car stuntman experiences in Hollywood movies.

GR: How did the idea of Super Runabout come about?

KN: Well, it was very simple. I just wanted to realize what I want to do in reality. In Tokyo, there are heavy traffic jams, too many pedestrians, and sign boards all over the street. Everyone wants to take shortcuts, right? You may have experienced that you want to crush road signs like "Under Construction," haven't you? Although you can't do this, you want to. That's the feeling that I wanted to capture in the game.

GR: Many were surprised that Ridge Racer V was outsold by "The Matrix" DVD at the launch of PlayStation 2. Why do you think this was?

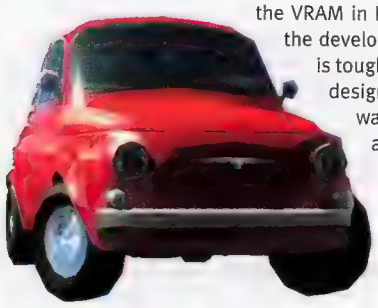
KN: This cannot be easily explained. Perhaps the reason for the incredible sales of "The Matrix" may be that it was the hottest title at the time of the PS2 release, and *The Matrix* was the first DVD that the Japanese experienced. Also, people used to buy at least one game when any new hardware was released, but DVD videos were hotter than any PS2 launch title at this time. And although Ridge Racer V is a great racing game with much more detailed graphics than R4, people were perhaps not as excited by a game with only a higher level of graphics without a similar evolution in gameplay.

GR: Are gamers getting bored of traditional racing games?

KN: Well, I don't think that gamers are bored with racing games. They may be getting bored of playing video games altogether. We have a lot of games, but their gameplay is often very similar. Also, people are starting to spend more money for entertainment other than video games, such as cellular phones, Internet, outdoor activities and movies. It is bad for the video-game industry. We must find a new type of video game.

GR: What do you think of the PS2? Are you interested in making Super Runabout for PS2?

KN: Umm...it is impossible to convert Super Runabout easily. We maximized the DC's VRAM with texture compression, and the VRAM in PS2 is too small and the development of PS2 games is tough. I wonder why Sony designed the PS2 in such a way? In order to make a game that satisfies people, we have to spend more money, time, and employ bigger development staffs. I believe that American software companies will develop nice development tools, which may solve the PS2's VRAM problem.



GR: What are your thoughts on Microsoft's Xbox?

KN: I really want to see what will happen when Microsoft gets into the video-game industry seriously. Personally, I want Microsoft to release Xbox in the same shape as they showed at the press conference. Also, since the system is Windows and Direct X-based, development should be much easier. Also, it will be easier to convert games from the DC to Xbox rather than PS2.

GR: Despite disappointing sales in Japan, Crazy Taxi has sold about one million copies in the U.S. market. Have you been considering the U.S. market when developing Super Runabout?

KN: Well, I hadn't been considering the U.S. market, although Runabout is said to resemble American or European games. Also, Super Runabout is set in San Francisco, so it may sell better in the States.

GR: Do you have any plans to develop another type of racing game other than the Runabout series?

KN: While I had been developing SR, I wondered if I could make a normal race simulator since the physics engine of SR was so well done. **GR**

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World Republic Interview with forty five co. producer sakamoto by tatsuki miura

TOKYO BUS TOUR

You've seen flight simulators or train simulators before, right? Now, have you ever seen a bus simulator? Here's a Dreamcast game that re-creates the thrill of driving a bus through Tokyo. It's called Tokyo Bus Tour, from Forty Five Co. TBT contains three courses from Tokyo Bus Lines, and you have a choice of driving times: noon, evening, and night. You have to drive safely according to the law, paying attention to passengers when they get on and off the bus, and you can also enjoy the stories of the passengers. We spoke with the game's producer, Mr. Sakamoto, about this very unique new simulator.

GR: How did you come up with the idea of a bus simulator?

Sakamoto: At first, we recruited ideas from within our company, and as a result of this examination, we ended up with a bus simulator.

GR: Were you concerned with comparisons to Tatio's Densha de Go! series?

S: Well, it would be a lie if I say I wasn't concerned, but I see Densha de Go! as a good example rather than as a rival.

GR: What are the sales points of TBT?

S: The most important point is that you can experience bus operation. This includes not only driving, but also letting passengers on and off the bus.

GR: I still see the TV commercials for TBT (the interview was held in May), although it has been four months since the game's release. Is this part of your marketing plan?

S: I think that TBT is a game that can have a long shelf life, so we decided to promote it again.

GR: One of the most popular racing titles, Ridge Racer V, was released for the PlayStation 2 launch, and 450,000 copies have been sold. On the other hand, 600,000 copies of "The Matrix" DVD have been sold. What do you think of this?

S: Well, Namco's RRV should have sold more, I think. In all honesty, I was surprised by its sales. In my opinion, the reason for the incredible sales of *The Matrix* is not only its quality as a movie, but also the rapid increase of the DVD market by PlayStation 2.

GR: Do you see TBT as a driving game or a kind of job simulator?

S: I think of TBT as a job simulator.

GR: These days, there are many unique driving games such as Crazy Taxi, Super Runabout, Tokyo Extreme Racer, Tokyo Bus Tour, etc. Do you think that this has happened because developers want to show a different approach to gameplay over something like Gran Turismo?

S: Yes, it is a simple matter of competition. But there are two sides to this equation. If we develop a game that takes the same approach as the others, its sales could be hampered. On the other hand, something too different may very well alienate gamers, so it's a gamble either way.

GR: I heard that some European and American press are interested in TBT. Do you have any plans to make European or U.S. versions of the game featuring London, New York, LA, etc.?

S: Well, I think it would be interesting, although I would prefer to see those that live there create their own Bus Tour Guide with their home town characteristics.

GR: Do you want to make TBT for PS2?

S: If I have any chance, I want to try it. GR

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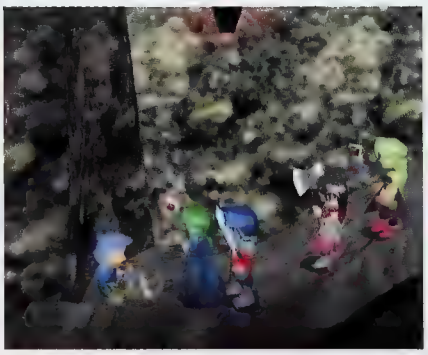
sorcerian



Sorcerian is a classic example of a game that normally would never see the light of day in America, especially in the year 2000. And while of late even the most obscure titles have surprisingly been localized (Espion Agents, for example), something tells me that Sorcerian, like Langrisser Millennium, is just too exotic to cross the pond. In a nutshell ("Austin Powers flashback!"), Sorcerian is best described as a team version of Y's 2. The action is comprised of classic (albeit polygonal) 2D, combining elements of exploration and spell casting, with heavy doses of role playing in between. But instead of controlling one lone pint-sized warrior, you manage a team of four, selected from a group of eight candidates. Each wields a unique attack tailored to his specific characteristics, creating that classic mix of spell casters, healers, and warriors. Sounds great, right? Well, it would be, but sadly, it is here where things begin to go awry. Because unless you are well versed in Kanji—the other Japanese—Sorcerian is brutally hard to decipher. Just getting your team ready for battle is extremely laborious, with menu after menu of complex equipping to grasp.

Sorcerian does not adhere to the basic import RPG formula, but instead demands that a complex array of character-specific preparations be completed before leaving a town—an excellent feature should the game be localized, yet all the more reason for a company to pass, due to its complexity. Talk about a catch-22. I know—major bummer, a Y's-style adventure on the Dreamcast, and it's a bitch to play. What sucks more is that it has all of the next-generation trappings to make it totally desirable like nicely animated super-deformed characters, beautiful art, expansive towns, and a great soundtrack. If you must, deductive reasoning and patience will haphazardly get you through, but it's really no way to play a game that has so much to give. Perhaps we'll get lucky and some small old-school third party will see our beacon. Stranger things have happened.

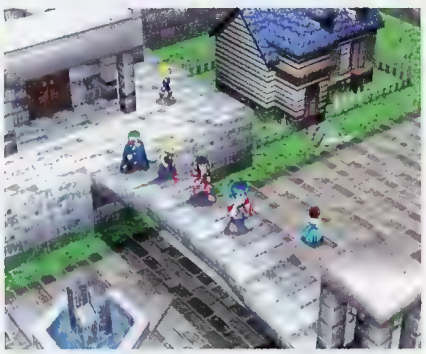
-Dave Halverson

PlayStation2 Review

SKY SURFER

The PlayStation 2 does not need games this bad this early in its life. Sky Surfer simply has no business on the system. Sure, the graphics have that tiny measure of rendered sparkle, but what is on display is so basic and unimpressive that it matters not one whit. And then there's the gameplay, split up between two modes, that encompass some mindless balloon popping and grossly cumbersome sky boarding.

Avoid Sky Surfer at all costs, and pray that we aren't subjected to this game for the domestic PS2 launch. **-M. Hobbs** **D-**



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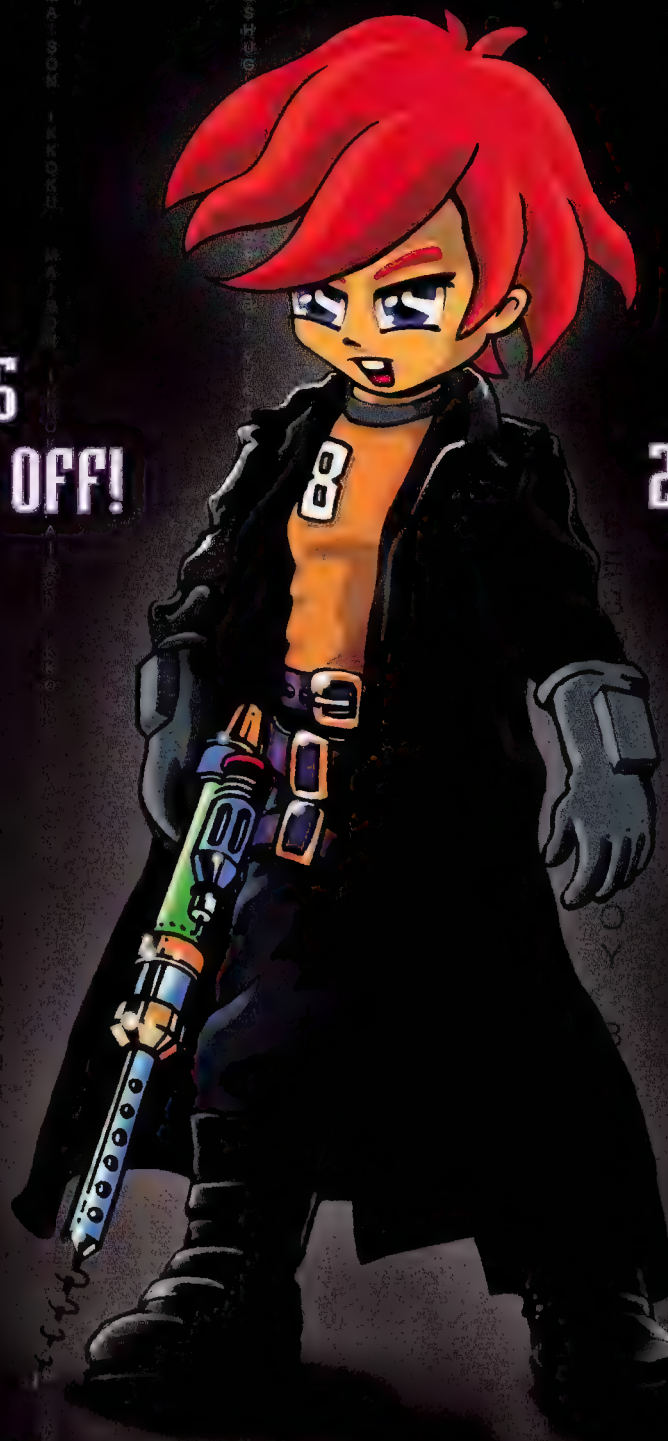

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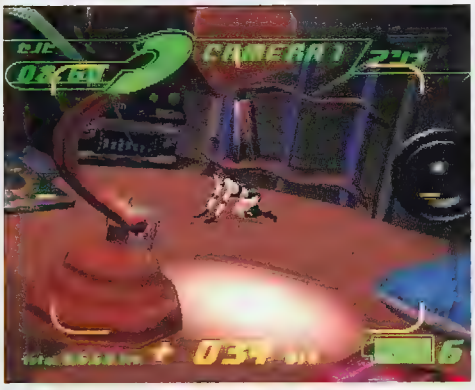
primal image

PS2



There's something vaguely creepy about Primal Image, a PS2 game where the object is to snap pictures of scantily clad ladies as they cavort around through different virtual environments. Switching between three different roving cameras, there is no control over the game other than the timing of the shutter release. In that respect, Primal Image doesn't even equal Pokémon Snap, which had, by comparison, a huge amount of gameplay.

The most amusing, and potentially perverted mode in the game, is the so-called Producer mode. Here, players can arrange objects and pose the different characters into myriad positions, some more unwholesome than others. Moving each joint through realistic levels of articulation and selecting from several different facial expressions, just about any type of still life can be created, and it's up to the user to exercise some self-restraint here. Be assured, however, that you're seeing the more kid-friendly scenes we created.

As a pure gimmick, Primal Image succeeds for about ten minutes. As a full-priced game, it's basically worthless. **-M. HOBBS**

D

World Republic Review • developer eighting/raizing/namco • publisher sony • available in japan now

oh! bakyuuun

PlayStation

Hot on the heels of Rescue Shot BuBiBo, Namco has another GunCon compatible game, this one published by Sony and developed by Eighting/Raizing, previously responsible for the flashy Bloody War games for PS. This is certainly a change of pace for them, but under the watchful eye of Namco, they've created the most enjoyable GunCon game since Gun Bullet.

A friendly and appealing sort of haunted-house theme drives the aesthetics of Oh! Bakyuuun, a game comprising a series of shooting mini-games, a lot like Gun Bullet. Everything from all-out blast-a-thons to quick sharp-shooting to fun boss challenges can be had, all making good use of the GunCon's inherent accuracy.

Games like this, when they're this well designed, are pure, simple fun, and players who ate up Gun Bullet will love Oh! Bakyuuun. **-M. HOBBS**

B

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- Animerica

It is said that whoever obtains the "Lovely Eyepatch" will inherit the swordsmanship and skills of one of Japan's greatest swordsman, Jubei Yagyu. Enter Jiyu Nanohana, an ordinary eighth grade girl who just happens to meet the special "requirements" of the eyepatch. But dealing with lovesick classmates and dueling teachers, will the overly sweet and innocent Jiyu accept the responsibilities of being the successor of Jubei? What's a

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DEVILMAN

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
•2000 MANGA
120 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/HORROR

Much maligned, the Devil has always been portrayed as an ugly freak at the helm of an army of mutated freaks. Well, the poor SOB has Go Nagai to thank for his anime DVD debut, in which his army gets trounced by a couple of teenage boys with an identity crisis. This 13-year-old two-hour demonic ooze-fest mixes a serious story with a B-Movie script, resulting in a peculiar but very watchable blend of campy horror and legitimate chills. The concept is that every major species has a natural predator, to keep the population manageable... except man. That's because our predators—demons—have been buried, frozen under the polar ice for thousands of years. Through our own planetary neglect, however, the polar ice caps are melting, and you know what that means: the demon popsicles are melting. Our two heroes in *Devilman*, Akira and Rio, both lose their archeologist parents to this menace, so they decide to singlehandedly stomp out the demon threat before they consume the world. It's kinda' like *Buffy*, but meaner, and with a lot more cussing. How will they achieve their lofty goal? Well, the best way to kill a demon is to become one yourself, and so Rio sets the stage for Akira to get himself possessed. If the demon gets the best of him, he'll burn in hell forever and that would suck, but if he can overcome the demon he will receive all of its power. Long story short, Akira wins and Devilman is born. You can imagine what follows.

For an older movie, the animation in both episodes is very respectable, but most noteworthy are the demon designs and animations. Never before have I seen so much oozing, slobbering, gushing, slicing and splitting. Akira, er, Devilman, really makes a mess when he goes chopping. As for the dub, well, that's another story. The first victim in episode 2, Ginman, sounded like Boss Hogg to me. Of course, he soon shows Akira his mother being torn to shreds, her intestines spilling out, and then her being absorbed into his turtle-like body, so who's listening, anyway.

DVD extras include 5.1 Dolby Digital Surround, a Go Nagai bio, a non-interactive photo gallery, filmography, the original trailer, *Manga* previews and of course web links.

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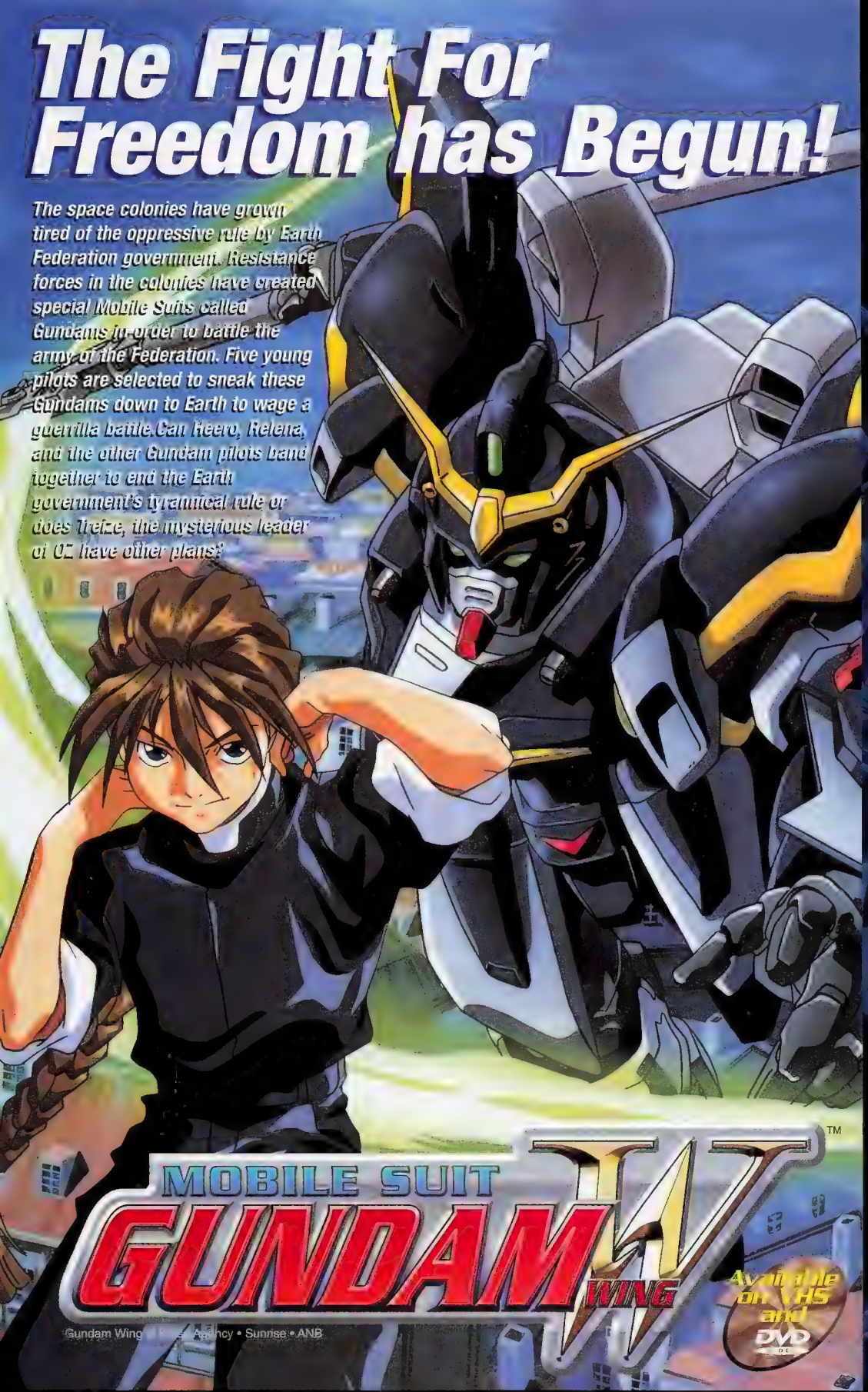

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Produced by: BANDAI entertainment

PHOTON: ENEMY PAWN

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
•2000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA.
60 MINUTES •ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

As it is and always shall be, every good anime series must have its prerequisite food and hot springs episodes. Getting these farcical mid-story meanderings out of the way is how Team Tenchi spends most of its time in *Photon* episodes 3 and 4, *Enemy Pawn*.

Of course, that scumbag Papacha is still hot on the trail of the shapely Keyne, the object of his sick affection, and she still believes that she is married to Photon... who just wants to get something to eat. Everytime his booby-trapped buffet is served, however, Papacha mysteriously launches a long distance a-ho attack (don't ask), sending his cuisine flying. Of course, Photon gets to rearrange his face as payback, but that doesn't solve his problem—hunger! (He drools so much in episode 3, I about hurled). With one-billion-brain-crystal-power at his disposal, Papacha should be pretty damn close to invulnerable, but he still cannot defend against Photon, and so he prods Pochi Number 1, the squatty leader of the fat little munchkins that serve him, to reconstruct enough crystals to transmit another attack. But when attack number two fails, in true form, Papacha casts poor old Pochi Number 1 out, leaving him for dead, and strangely enough, Photon befriends him, or, uh, it. So as episode three closes, Number 1 joins Photon, Aun, and Keyne as they zip across the desert for God knows what reason. In-between, Number 1 discovers Papacha's real motivation (to rule the universe and mount every woman in it), Aun and Keyne partake in a cataclysmic cook-off, and everyone gets wet and wild in the hot springs when Papacha poses as an inn keeper to get yet another shot at Keyne. I guess 13 wives just aren't enough.

The animation throughout holds up well, looking far better than most mini-series and the character designs - some of the most original in recent memory, continue to grow on me.

This is a weird show, but I'm diggin' it. Compared to the first hour, these episodes are somewhat awkward and the story is buried under so many layers of strangeness, but they serve as a good mid-series buffer, providing the comic relief for a great new series that will hopefully culminate in impressive fashion and spawn a few sequels.

前タイ

SUPER HYPER ACTION

SLAYERS TRY: THE DRAGON SHRINE?

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 SOFTWARE SCULPTORS LTD.
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/COMEDY

The growing *Slayers* saga continues in this first volume of *Slayers Try*. With the destruction of the Hellmaster Phibrizzo in the last series, a magic wall between Lina's world and a place known only as "Outside" has been torn down. Adventurers quickly gather to take advantage of the new opportunity to explore an uncharted region. In the meantime, Lina is approached by a strange blonde woman with a tail named Filia, who apparently wants to hire her to save the world. Again. Although the whole "Lina saving the world" idea is somewhat old by this point, the strange humor is really enough to keep the series moving. Once again, Lina and Gourry team up with Zelgadis and Amelia, who seem to conveniently show up. One would think that this team has gotten a bit stale, but the added element of Filia adds much to the mix.

Filia is a young priestess from the Golden Dragon temple, who has some personality quirks, as well has a two-ton spiked club for self-defense that she will happily use with abandon. Also for all ye Xellos fans, expect more appearances from him, and some healthy personality friction between him and Filia. He won't appear until a little later, and I can't tell you when, because "sore wa himitsu desu."

Practically nothing else has changed about *Slayers* for this series. The character design still skirts the line between imaginative for certain characters, and horrendously bland for others. The slapstick humor and bad jokes about the apparent capacity or lack thereof inside Gourry's feeble brain also remain. And the art and animation quality are the same. Dubbing is the only place where *Slayers* fails rather miserably. Once again, there is *no one* who can replace any voice done by Megumi Hayashibara. To hear someone else attempt to do Lina's whiny pout is practically sacrilegious.

This new series is basically just more of the same. By this point in the series, if one has not seen all of the earlier episodes, *Slayers Try* will be very confusing, because *Slayers* is one of those series that really must be seen from the very beginning. And if you love *Slayers* enough to stick with it this long, you might as well spend the extra money and buy the subtitle version.

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- Mark Jackson, EX-Anime

Mysterious clues about Sylia's hidden past begin to surface as the Knight Sabers are drawn into a deadly race to discover a missing research facility. But even as they near their objective, the team starts to fall apart, and the real reasons for the Knight Sabers' existence come into question. Underneath the ruins of old Tokyo, the ultimate nightmare begins to awake as a long buried secret turns into a deadly trap in the sixth shocking volume of *Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040*.

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ANIMATION FOR A NEW GENERATION!

TRIGUN VOL.2

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•2000 PIONEER

90 MINUTES•SUBTITLED/ENGLISH DUBBED

★★★★ ADVENTURE/COMEDY

With this second volume, *Trigun* definitely takes a turn for the better. While the first volume is decently funny, a little misleading, and less than impressive, the second volume finally does Vash the Stampede justice.

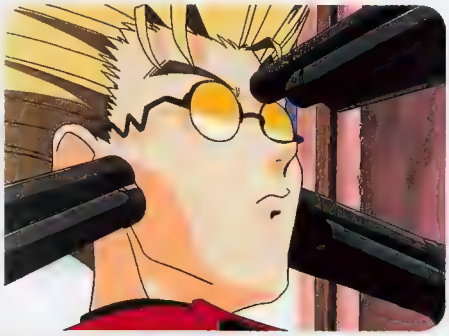
The misadventures of the tall blonde guy with a red leather trench coat and two insurance agents continue. The bounty on Vash's head drives a normally peace-loving city of civilians to attempt to capture the Humanoid Typhoon. But is Vash's bounty worth everyone's lives? Vash comes face to face with a woman from his cloudy past who wants revenge for events that he has no memory of.

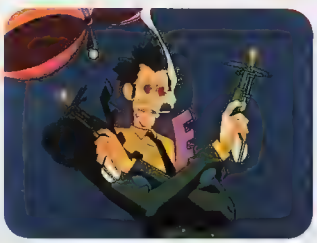
The stories have the benefit of being mostly self-contained, but still connected to each other. This way the viewer gets a feeling of accomplishment after only 30 minutes, but without that disjointed broken story feeling where the main plot is rarely seen or heard. The most satisfying part of this second volume, for violence-mongers (like myself) who felt let down by the first tape, is that Vash finally stands up and starts fighting back.

Vash is not just an incredibly lucky moron. He can wield that sledgehammer of a handgun or even a child's dart gun whenever the situation calls for it.

Vash's character has the endearing personality mix of loner, tail chasing moron, and professional gunman to appeal to both genders. The music in *Trigun* is another section where this anime excels. There are already two soundtracks out called *Trigun: The First Donuts* and, logically, *Trigun: The Second Donuts*. The character design bears a very strong resemblance to the designs from *Escaflowne*. In fact, I would not be at all surprised to see that the two anime shared a designer.

Combined with the goodies on the DVD version, *Trigun* is well worth your hard earned, inherited, or stolen cash. For those of you who didn't like the first tape, please give the scrawny white guy with a gun another chance. LOVE AND PEACE!





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COWBOY BEBOP VOL.7 EPISODES 13,14

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 BANDAI ENT.
50 MINUTES EACH•ENGLISH SUBTITLED
★★★★★ *ACTION/DRAMA*

Please stop! We can't take it! Thank God episode 14 is a total throw-away on the Bebop scale that neither hurts nor improves the Bebop universe if it didn't exist (it's about an old anarchist with a degenerated mind focused solely on beating Ed at a chess match), but it's so good that it's better than 99.9 percent of the hyped garbage on the market. Then again, after episode 12, and the conclusion in episode 13, as a *Bebop* fan, I'd simply burst if the show gave me all the best stuff when I wanted it. It's so good, I'd just die.

Spike's mortal enemy Vicious returns. We get closer to finding out what happened between Vicious, Spike, and julia, and between the expert direction, the plot twists, and the overall character development, there isn't much more to be said that hasn't been said about this series already. *Bebop* is that good. Dammit, I hate repeating myself.

Backing up, Spike tracks down the arms-dealer Gren who has business of his own with Vicious, and ultimately all three have ties to Julia. Faye gets caught up in the mix, but the real stars of this show, as I've come to realize, are series director Shinchiro Watanabe, and writers Nobumoto, Yokate, Yamaguchi, and Murai. The buildup between Spike and Vicious is powerful without words, but it's the pacing and feeling of movement that comes with this series that one can't help but feel they've tasted quality.

Faye Valentine gets a bit of a tragic past too, which falls in line with the rest of the Bebop's crew. And it's her very human interaction with Gren that makes this episode of *Bebop* just as poignant as the initial meeting between Spike and Vicious.

I can't express enough how much I love this series. There are some tragic turnabouts in these episodes, but death, life, and love are to be expected in this series. This if fine melodrama, all of it. And while not quite as impacting as episodes 5 or 6, this is all quality stuff. I can't wait for the promised movie.

JUNGLE DE IKOU

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
•2000 ANIME WORKS
90 MINUTES•ENGLISH SUBTITLED
★★★★ *ACTION/WEIRDNESS*

As a watcher of anime, I've been privy to some pretty cracked stuff—manufactured girlfriends, virtual idols, time-sensitive sex changes, the selling of underwear for cash, all manner of transformations, and even rectal ping-pong ball shooting. But nothing could prepare me for *Jungle De Ikou*. In a nutshell, 10-year-old Natsumi's father, an archeologist with a singing jones, returns from New Guinea with a strange-looking pygmy-like relic that he gives to his perky little girl as a gift. That night as Natsumi sleeps, she is transported into a place where a decrepit old jungle god, Ahem (who covers his massive salami with a peculiar sleeve), reveals to her a sexy dance, which she will need to perform when situations get out of hand (?). The reason why situations will definitely get out of hand is revealed soon after when she awakens from her dream state with a cute little native boy in tow. As fate would have it, this cute, curious little fellow is the very god the old man warned of, Ongo, who will supposedly bring about the end of the world. The next day when Ongo gets a taste of fried whale meat his first day in Japan (he's been sealed away for thousands of years, so he's never seen a city), he goes berserk and magically conjures up a real whale! Next thing you know, Tokyo is 3/4 under water and Natsumi and Zod are riding whale-back, with the army hot on their tail, or fin, or whatever. Next, Natsumi reluctantly performs the sex dance (which includes a hump-like motion I don't want to see a 10-year-old perform) that Ahem taught her, and morphs into Mii, a jungle goddess with gargantuan bouncing breasts. Apparently, in the jungle, a woman's power is ascertained by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 139 ▸

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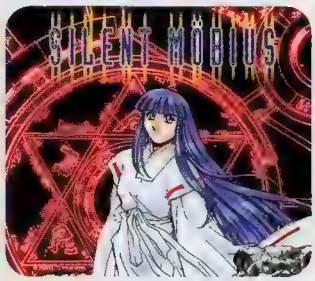
SILENT MOBIUS VOL.3, EPISODES 5,6

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•1999 BANDAI ENT.
50 MINUTES EACH•ENGLISH SUBTITLED
★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

The business-minded AMPD ladies are effective on the field, but don't make many friends from their department fellows. The solution? The ladies decide to throw a party. Kiddy loosens up a bit in her love-hate relationship, as it's revealed that she isn't who she appears to be at all.

There's something to be said about having the original writers of a series have a hand in the remakes. Fortunately, I've seen fansub versions of Kia Aamiya's original *Silent Mobius* movies some years ago, and enjoyed the work immensely. Masaki Tanaka's pointy-nosed heroines have a unique sternness about them that doesn't leave much room for anime's comedic tricks of exaggerated faces and/or silly expressions for levity. But that's okay. These very feminine characters have a sort of *Bubblegum Crisis* appeal to them. And that encompasses the overall series' tone, too. Hard-edged and aggressive, particularly the priss of the lot in Kiddy Phenil, this team of paranormal cops provides the best of '80s-era drama, outdoing *Crisis 2040* at it's own game by getting the bloody point and taking the whole thing seriously. While nothing original, it's all well-done cliche, and solid story telling at the least.



After using the previous episodes to effectively explain why no one member is any more important than another, episodes 5 and 6 give the cast a chance to breathe, the audience a chance to see where the writers are headed, and the AMPD reasons why they're important to the world they're in. And it's that insight on where the show is going that provides the greatest delight. While the movies did little more than showcase the power of Katsumi Liqueur, the retool does a magnificent job of endearing us to the entire cast. That's why when episodes like *Megadyne* make an appearance, where the art and personal nature of the story jump three fold, they're special. And they should be. This is writing, combined with the unique supernatural storyline, and exceptional art, just give me another reason to love Anime Village and Bandai for having the good sense to bring this stateside.

OUTLAW STAR VOL. 8,9

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•1999 BANDAI ENT.
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH SUBTITLED
★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

For those of you who haven't given up on *Outlaw Star*, it has finally delivered some decent storytelling. These few episodes are better written and there is more forwarding of the main plot, which has been suspiciously absent for quite some time.

Gene Starwind now has a band of deadly assassins, called the Anten 7, who want to see him dead. The first two members approach Gene separately and attempt to remove him from the world of the living. In the meantime, the MacDougall brothers have resurfaced, and they are showing much interest in Melfina and the Outlaw Star. In-between all of these problems, life still goes on for Gene's business, as he takes on two new jobs to keep the money rolling in.

It's about time that Outlaw Star finally picked up the pace and became somewhat interesting. Unfortunately, it could possibly be too late. Nine tapes into a series is a little too long to wait for it to start delivering. But on the bright side, *Outlaw Star* is one of those series that allows new viewers to hop in at any point without going back and seeing all of the previous tapes, and still understand what is going on. Does this mean that the storytelling is simple and rather shallow? Yes, but you have to take what you can get at this point. So if you're looking for some amusing fillers while awaiting the next tape in your favorite series, pick up volumes 8 and 9 of *Outlaw Star*. This is as good a place as any to jump in.

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SERIES 17

Todd's latest Series—17—sees a return to the more traditional Spawn designs. Spawn V, Medieval Spawn, Tiffany, Clown, Al Simmons, and the lovely Malebolgia are headed your way this July. Rob Zombie should finally have rolled out in the back of his Dragula by the time you read this as well.

MOVIE MANIACS III

These new Movie Maniacs, series III, need no introduction, but I will make one anyway... Coming to you all the way from the shack out back, it's Ash! And from the post-apocalyptic streets of L.A., say hello to Snake Plissken. Bad, bad movie—nice figure, though.

Speaking of John Carpenter, any breathing post-teen mammal not familiar with *The Thing* should Frisbee the N'Sync CD and join the rest of us. Rounding out the cast is Edward Scissorhands, and the new Shaft. Well, actually he's the real Shaft's cousin, but then who's old enough to remember? ***Dave Halverson***

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MORTAL KOMBAT

From the licking, er, I mean pushing-the-envelope department, new company Infinite Concepts is releasing a spectacular line of Mortal Kombat action figures. The first assortment will be available this summer and includes amazing likenesses of Subzero, Liu Kang, Mileena, Scorpion, Shang Tsung, and Sonya Blade. These figures not only feature phenomenal sculpts, but have some of the most impressive articulation around. Or to put it more bluntly, these figure have perhaps the best articulation of any figure current on the market in the under-12" category.

In a business where CEOs are always trying to save a pre[illegible] two cents (and have affairs with their secretaries), it's [illegible] to see a new company that is willing to take risks. "I believe the individual is as powerful as any giant corporation," says Terry Lattimer, president of Infinite Concepts and chief designer and creator of COGJIT (Center Of Gravity Joint Integrity Technology). "We've made figures that utilize the joints and joint parts into the actual sculpt."

What this means for fans and collectors is a series of figures with sixteen some odd points of articulation that allow them to be posed in an [illegible] array of action stances. This also means collectors can use words like COGJIT. For instance, go to some exclusive Hollywood party and drop the term COGJIT around with an air of superiority. People will flock to you, women will moan with desire.

Well, not really. COGJIT . Let's take a look; thanks in part to Lattimer's innovative compound ankle joint that allows all positioning to keep the feet parallel to the floor, said figure can be posed in some funky ways and keep the damn pose. That's right. No need for stands or tape on the feet. Nope. These figures require little to no hand support.

So there! COGJIT! It's the sexy new phrase of the new era. Long live COGJIT! And long live women moaning with desire! ***-Nick Lanier***

Photos by Ryan Brookhart

DEVIL MAN

Here, my friends and cohorts, is a company to watch—Fewture Models (fewtureusa@aol.com). Obviously these mikes have an eye for all that is macabre, malformed and twisted coming out of the East. You really need to salivate over their entire line to appreciate the body (or cadaver, in this case) of work they offer, but here are a choice few to get your appetite for destruction. I'll begin from the left and slither across. First up, Hellbaby's 7 inches of mutated infant from the Japanese comic. Joining him are Shadow Lady Satan (and a do-able version at that), Zenon, VooDoo Nag [illegible] and her little friend, and OVA Devilman. So give the gift of love next time you're shopping for that special somebody and float some demonic vinyl or plastic their way. You'll be glad ya did. ***-Dave Halverson***

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• Hori Power Grip

Hori • www.hori.ne.jp/p21.html • Retail: $35

Desirability:

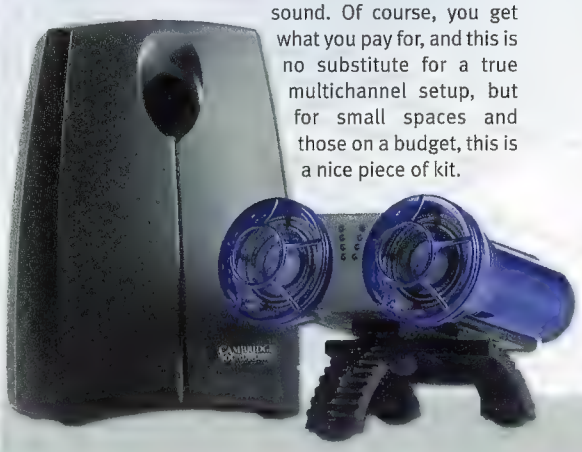
In a sea of poorly made replacement pads for the PlayStation, Hori's Power Grip, which is compatible with both the PS and PS2, stands a perfect example of how to build and design a third-party pad. Made of a high-quality plastic with a satisfying rough-texture surface, the pad features three different analog modes and two different vibration settings. Available in a metallic black and metallic silver (shown), the Japanese Hori Power Grip is currently available only from importers such as Tronix. You may pay a little extra for the quality, but it's worth it.

• Playworks PS2000

Creative Labs • www.creative.com • Retail: $250

Desirability:

Not everyone can afford a proper six channel setup to enjoy the PS2's 5.1 surround capability, so Creative Labs is planning to release the PlayWorks PS2000, which originally debuted in Japan from I/O Data. Featuring an active sub from Cambridge Soundworks, the interestingly shaped device is designed to simulate the sensation of multichannel sound with a technology called Stereo Dipole, licensed from Adaptive Audio Limited. The device, when used with the PS2's optical output, does a fair psycho-acoustic imitation of surround sound. Of course, you get what you pay for, and this is no substitute for a true multichannel setup, but for small spaces and those on a budget, this is a nice piece of kit.



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• Sony NW-E3

Sony • www.sony.com • Retail: $329.95

Desirability:

Sony made waves with their Memory Stick Walkman and Vaio Music Clip solid state music players, and they've recently added a third model to their line of Network Players. The NW-E3 is smaller and lighter than the Memory Stick Walkman, and though its 64MB Embedded Flash Memory cannot be upgraded, it's infinitely reusable and should be good for roughly one hour of music at the highest quality encoding. Running on common AAA cells, this versatile music player is about as small as they come, even with its large alphanumeric display. Like all Sony Network Players, a PC (or Mac running Virtual PC) with Windows 98 and a USB port is required to transfer music files to the unit.

• Sony MiniDisc

Sony • MZ-E90: $449.95/MZ-R90: $399.95

Desirability:

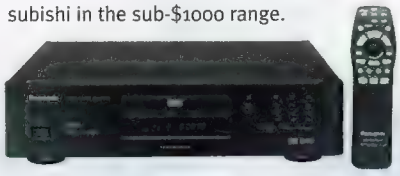
Sony's new MiniDisc player/recorders are smaller and more feature-packed than ever. First we have the MZ-E90, a playback-only unit that Sony claims is the smallest in the world. Its lightweight magnesium case and up to 56 hours of playback time make it a perfect travel companion. The MZ-R90 is Sony's smallest player/recorder, and it also boasts a digital input, allowing it to be connected directly to any CD player's (or PS2's) optical output for near-perfect digital recordings.

Panasonic DVD-H1000

www.panasonic.com/consumer_electronics/dvd/progscan.htm • Retail: $3000

Desirability:

Progressive Scan technology currently provides the highest level of DVD performance when paired with High Definition TV, and Panasonic's Progressive Scan DVD-H1000 sits at the apex of their consumer models. Progressive Scan technology displays the video image in one field, creating a much more film-like image, as opposed to a typical interlaced image. The Panasonic DVD-H1000 requires a high definition-capable television with a 480P (progressive) component input and $3000 of expendable cash. Look for lower prices in the coming months, including a machine from Mitsubishi in the sub-$1000 range.



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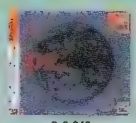
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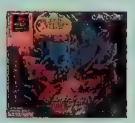
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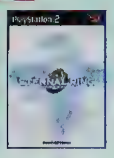
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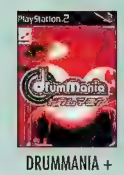
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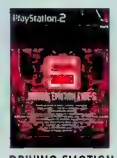
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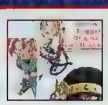
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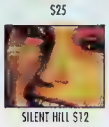
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GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

SLIPKNOT

To best describe the attitude and feel of Slipknot's music, try to picture walking up to your grandma on Mother's Day and flipping her off after spitting on her shoes. The raw, gritty sounds that the nine members create are some of the hardest in a long, long time for metal. Decked-out in bar-coded coveralls and self-made masks to make one casual listener even more uncomfortable, Slipknot creates music that can proudly be called "the shit."

*"We never put on the shit we wear to try and get people into us," says Joey Jordison. "We did it because, after being degraded constantly for trying to play music or do something in Des Moines, I just came to be like we were an anonymous entity. No one gave a f***, no one cared, so we were never about our names or our faces, we're just about music. So we just put it on and it started gettin' people, and it just started to turn into this big thing. The music's most important, though. The coveralls and masks happened, and for some reason it worked, therefore we had to kind of continue with it. We got stuck with it."*

Their stage names are just as aesthetic, members known as a number instead of a name. This obstructs the media from focusing on the dreamy guitar player or the doe-eyed drummer, instead the heart of the music is understood as being the product of a family unit.

Fortunately for us, we were able to catch up with the guys on May 12, as the band rolled into the Palladium in Hollywood. While waiting for #5 (Craig), who handles samples, we watched sound checks and overheard news that their self titled CD, Slipknot, had just gave platinum. Looks like the infestation has started to take over the world. Here's some of what was said that hot day in L.A.

GR: Hey man, let me start by saying the music is f*'n tight.**
Slipknot: [Grinning] ...thanks.

GR: The Slipknot websites are pretty tight, not to mention heavy on graphics. Who handles them?
Slipknot: (Craig) I handle Slipknot.com and our road tech/guitar tech takes care of Sinknot.com.

GR: Really...then you update the site on a regular basis?
Slipknot: Yeah. While out on the road it can be tough sometimes, but in the end get it done whenever the chance comes up. My wife helps me with the pages every once in a while and keeps an eye on things too. If I can't get something done while I'm out, she'll do it for me from the house. It's become a lot easier now that we are marketing. I can remember a couple years, instead of being the secondary act and asking permission from a tour manager to get on a phone line.

GR: Did you come up with the design and format used in Slipknot1.com?
Slipknot: I use basic HTML with a little bit of Java. That way everyone can view the pages, even if their computer doesn't have Flash or isn't fast. Then we have Slipknot for those who do. That way we can give our fans the best of both worlds.

GR: That's pretty damn cool to take time and make the effort to please your fans. When did you start to take an interest in computers? Did you take any formal classes or training to program?
Slipknot: No. I've been doing computer stuff for like ... 10 years. So, I kinda picked it up along the way.

GR: Nice. Do you apply any of the science used in creating pages toward your approach to music?
Slipknot: [Grinning] Yeah ... I use most of the samples and stuff I use, I do on the computer first, then I transfer it over to my sampler. It works easier for me that way, because I've been really around with samples on my computer for a long time. I found some with fans and started effects off the web and I'll twist them around a lot. I don't think I've used any in our songs.

GR: But it helps give you ideas?
Slipknot: Yeah ... seeing that together like what I want to do.

GR: Sounds like you've got a lot on your plate. Your interests in computers include games too?
Slipknot: [Laughing] Yeah ... my favorite games for the PC are the Quake series, Quake and Quake 2. I haven't really had a chance to play much of Quake 3 because I'm away from home so much.

GR: Has the group been approached to provide music for a video game? Or have you guys seen a game where you thought your music would apply perfectly to what is going on on the screen?

Slipknot: There are probably a lot of different games that our music can be applied to. Personally I'm into the first-person shooters like Quake and Duke 3D, and I think our music is perfect for them. It's going to happen soon. We are working with getting our music into games. I'm not certain where we are yet, but it's going to be put together soon. So that will be really cool. To be able to play a game and listen to our music.

GR: Absolutely...damn, I'm already there. Anyone else in the group heavy into video games?

Slipknot: Umm...yeah, Shawn. We use to play Quake over the modem and Internet a lot. Most of the other guys are into console games. It's a little weird for them to play PC games because I play games using the keyboard, and they are used to controllers.

GR: And of course, you probably feel the exact opposite?

Slipknot: Exactly. I can't remember how I've played on the PlayStation controller.

GR: I take it you guys carry a system on your tour bus?

Slipknot: Funny you should say that, because this time we are without a system. Everyone thought someone else in the group was going to bring their PlayStation and it ends up no one brought a system. Well...except for Mic. I think he brought his N64. But he keeps it in his bunk.

GR: What about...

Slipknot: Oh yeah! Another game that Jim and I have been playing a lot of is Tony Hawk's Pro Skater on the PlayStation. We've been into it for about two months. It's totally addictive. We'll play it all day and get ready to call it a night and crash. Neither of us could stop thinking about it and one of us would wake the other after a few hours to play it some more.

GR: Believe me! I know exactly what you are talking about. Once you start to learn those grind combos the game really grabs you.

Slipknot: Yeah...that game rules. There is always something new to find on it.

GR: So, it's obvious to me, you guys like and play video games. Back in the day, older games used sequenced blips and beeps in a variety of different tempos to set the mood. Did these ever influence your music?

Slipknot: I don't really think so, but I've also never sat and thought about it either. It probably has. Sid our DJ has a record with a lot of video game sounds and I was playing it the other day. It was kinda weird, so I think I am going to get some of it on my computer and mess around with it.

GR: Would you say video games are just as much a part of your life as music?

Slipknot: Yeah...though I don't play near as much as I use to, just because I don't have the time. What I've been getting into lately are some of the emulators for the PC.

GR: I realize you need to finish with the sound checks, so I'll quit with the talk. Thanks for the time.

Slipknot: It's cool. You ready for the show?

GR: Absolutely!

Slipknot: Ever been to our show? No, huh. [Grinning] You're in for a treat. We'll catch up later.

That night we cut out from the Sony party going on in Culver City at the Sony Pictures Studios to witness and be a part of the loudest show we've ever been invited to. Check out more about Slipknot at www.slipknot1.com and www.slipknot2.com and be sure to grab a copy of their latest self-titled CD and expose yourself to the virus infecting heads around the world. **TOM STRATTON**

Audiophiles
What GR is listening to this month:

D. Halverson	B. Fiechter	M. Hobbs	T. Stratton	Pooch
1. **PROJECT 86** *drawing black lines*	1. **SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE** *-self titled*	1. **P GLASS** *-symphony no. 3, the light mechanical ballet*	1. **OUTKAST** *aquemini*	1. **FATBOY SLIM** *norman cook collection*
2. **THE THE** *naked self*	2. **NIL** *lara*	2. **SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE** *-self titled*	2. **MARIAH CAREY** *rainbow*	2. **CYPRESS HILL** *skull & bones*
3. **MDFMK** *mdfmk*	3. **ERIN BROCKOVICH** *soundtrack*	3. **THE ORB** *peel sessions*	3. **SLIPKNOT** *slipknot*	3. **ISRAEL VIBRATION** *strength of my life*
4 **ONE MINUTE SILENCE** *buy now...saved later*	4. **MAGNOLIA** *soundtrack*	4. **LAURIE ANDERSON** *bright red/tightrope*	4. **E*40** *tka charlie hustle*	4. **DJ SHADOW** *endtroducing*
5 **KEOKI** *dj mixed.com*	5. **PEARL JAM** *binaural*	5. **UTE LEMPER** *punishing kiss*	5. **A PERFECT CIRCLE** *mer de noms*	5. **BARRY WHITE** *the ultimate collection*

J.R. Haugen	C. Hoffman	E. Fear	B. Elmquist	G. Abraham
1. **SAMBA DE AMIGO** *music from the game*	1. **MATCHBOX 20** *mad season*	1. **STEVE VAI** *fire garden*	1. **SLIPKNOT** *slipknot*	1 **SMITH & MIGHTY** *big world small world*
2. **SAMBA DE AMIGO** *music from the game again*	2. **YASUNORI MITSUDA & MILLENNIAL FAIR:** *creid*	2. **SLIPKNOT** *slipknot*	2. **THREE DOORS DOWN** *a better life*	2. **DIESELBOY** *system upgrade*
3. **SAMBA DE AMIGO** *music from the game, still*	3. **DRACULA MIDI COLL.** *soundtrack*	3. **TOTO** *tambu*	3. **NOFX** *i heard they suck live*	3. **DOM & ROLAND** *industry*
4. **SAMBA DE AMIGO** *do you get the point?*	4. **LEGEND OF MANA** *original soundtrack*	4. **BLINK 182** *dude ranch*	4. **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 2** *soundtrack*	4. **L'ARC-N-CIEL** *tierra*
5. **SAMBA DE AMIGO** *the music is that good!*	5 **SAVAGE GARDEN** *affirmation*	5. **FRIDAY** *soundtrack*	5. **PAPA ROACH** *infest*	5. **ROBOT CARNIVAL** *original soundtrack*

HEAVY METAL 2000

STARZ HOME ENTERTAINMENT (www.heavymetal2k.com)
DOMESTIC • CABLE BROADCAST (STARZ)
RATED R FOR VIOLENCE AND GORE, SEXUALITY/NUDITY AND LANGUAGE.
REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

Heavy Metal 2000 will not see a wide theatrical release as was the original plan, but rather, will debut on cable (Starz/Encore, midnight, July 14) and also occupy the wee-hours at smaller art house theatres in and around major metropolitan areas. Amen to that. In order to slide *HM 2000* in underneath the PG13 radar, the film would have to have been neutered down to a safe and sane level. Instead, it is thankfully saturated with nudity, naughty words, violence, and even a little alien sex, and so all is right in the galaxy. It likely wouldn't have opened very wide anyway due to the fact that even on its best day, in terms of production values, *HM 2000* can't compete with big-budget fare like *Titan AE* or the current crop from Dreamworks and Disney. Amen once again.

When the first *Heavy Metal* Movie debuted back in '81, animated features were pretty much relegated to G-rated cell animation, aside from the odd Bakshi masterpiece like *Wizards, Fire and Ice* or *American Pop*. The film was unique, edgy, polished by Ivan Reitman and frequented by the huge pot-smoking demographic that it was designed for. Nowadays, however, $15 million (*HM 2000*'s budget) is a drop in the bucket to produce a feature-length film that melds cell animation and CGI, and *Heavy Metal Magazine* isn't as unique a product as it once was. With the advent of similar fare popping up all over the net and sporadically on cable and video (in productions such as *Aeon Flux*, *The Maxx*, and *Spawn*), *Heavy Metal* is still the tome of choice for adult-oriented fantasy in print, but the romance that the '80s brought is over. Considering these obstacles and the state of American animation (can you say fruity?), *HM 2000* is a resounding success. I personally enjoyed it far more than any number of 100-million-dollar epics of late laced with I'm-so-happy-I-could-piss-fruit-juice musical interludes that make me curl up in my seat and pull my shirt over my head. I don't care how godly the animation, I despise "sweet melodies" intertwined in my cinema.

Falling somewhere between direct to video and big budget in terms of production values, the CGI falls into about the same category as the melding of the CG and traditional animation styles–it's a great-looking movie with a definite homegrown feel. It's that charm, though, that draws you to it. The more you watch *HM 2000*, the deeper you can look into it and pick out the little nuances that the artists spun into the depths of its interior. But what really makes the film go are the characters, along with a bone-crunching soundtrack and some first-rate voice talent. Michael Ironside, as Tyler, delivers one of the best performances I have ever heard. His understanding of the material and delivery elevates the entire film. Julie Strain Eastman and Billy Idol turn out commendable performances as well. The look of the film—a sort of *Batman the Animated Series* meets HBO's *Spawn*—is suitably dark and very well shaded, and the mecha and character designs are highly original.

Based on a graphic novel "The Melting Pot" written by *Heavy Metal* publisher Kevin Eastman (yeah, the TMNT guy) and illustrated by art god Simon Bisley, *HM 2000* chronicles the story of one man's lust for immortality and the woman who wants his gonads for her trophy case. In other words, it's a story of revenge. The bad, insane, tyrannical Tyler becomes obsessed with his own immortality and subsequent universal rule after he discovers a strange key during a routine mining expedition that transforms him from a mild-mannered driller to a human T-Rex. After depositing a jackhammer into his co-worker's chest, Tyler returns to the mother

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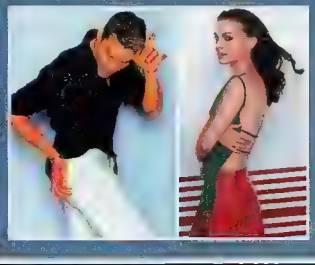
mining ship, The Cortez, does a little house cleaning (he paints the place red) and sets out on his quest for immortality. The key, a shiny green crystal shard, is beckoning Tyler to the planet Uroboris, where the compound that provides life everlasting (HM2K-503) has been sealed away. But in the meantime, to remain all-powerful, he must secure enough potion for the journey, so he and the remaining crew, now a band of self-proclaimed space pirates, begin to search the immediate galaxy. Scanning a FAKK planet (Federation Assigned Ketogenic Killzone), uninhabitable by carbon-based life forms, they hit pay dirt (or in this case pay flesh). Living under the FAKK classification to keep intruders away, they discover Eden, a utopian society where mankind is beginning to rebuild. As fate would have it, the Aracacians—the fallen race that once harnessed the key's power—buried some of the compound on Eden back when they were terrorizing the galaxy, and so traces of it show up in the citizens' systems. Tyler wastes no time leveling the city and incubating those who survive the onslaught, creating his own human distillery. He missed one, though—the shapely Julie—and after watching her father fry, she's got one thing on her mind: Tyler's head on a stick.

Hopefully *HM 2000*'s cable debut and the subsequent merchandising taking place on the web and in several sci-fi publications will deem it a success and prompt more ventures aimed at a mature consumer. Which is all the more reason to look past HM2000's limitations and celebrate its pioneer spirit. If you partake in nothing else Heavy Metal this year, but frequent the delectable sounds of metal and industrial, do pick up the soundtrack. Aside form a couple speed-metal fatalities, it's all very very good. Monster Magnet, Billy Idol, MDFMK, Sinisstar, Queens of the Stone Age, and Zilch all deliver stellar tracks. I commend Kevin Eastman and everyone who worked on *HM 2000* (through all 23 drafts of the story) for sticking with it and staying true to the magazine and its readers. I certainly appreciate it. **GR**

THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

QUICK BITS FROM HELL GR has gotten many indications this month that the world is about to end. Among them: Mike Myers' feature length *Sprockets* project is getting off the ground (which should be a good thing), but David Hasselhoff may play the villain. Will he touch the monkey? • We may be in store for a *Dirty Dancing* sequel, starring (wait for it) Ricky Martin and Natalie Portman. Oh, my queen, can it be? • MTV Films is looking to produce a musical version of *Alice in Wonderland*, with Britney Spears in the lead. The rest of the cast will likely be announced just as Satan begins his march onto the overworld. • On the TV front, Cyndi Shepherd is in talks to take over for the departing Kathie Lee Gifford on *Live with Regis and Kathie Lee*. Goodbye, frying pan; hello fire. • **BUCK UP** It's not all bad news this month. Rob Zombie's *House of a 000 Corpses* just began production, and even if it ends up looking like a feature-length White Zombie video, we're there. • The next two *Matrix* movies will officially include Carrie-Anne Moss. Be real: she's the reason we got the first one on DVD anyway. • Limp Bizkit frontman Fred Durst is set to direct his first film, *Run*, about a high school kid going after students who pick on him. Ok, it may not be all that original an idea, but we want to see how Fred tackles this avenue of the media. Plus there's likely to be nudity. • Zoiks, Scoob! The live-action feature film version of Scooby Doo has been written, and Mike Myers may sign on to play Shaggy. We'll let you know who'll be the other meddling kids.



EXCITEBIKE 64

ACCESS CHEAT SCREEN
To bring up the cheat codes screen, at the main menu, simultaneously hold down the top shoulder L + C-Right + C-Down and press A.

WHERE'D EVERYONE GO?
To make the riders invisible, enter INVISRIDER at the cheat code screen.

MIRROR MODE
To ride on reverse tracks, enter YADAYADA at the cheat code screen.

HUGE NOGGINS
To get big head mode, enter BLAHBLAH at the cheat code screen.

I'M THE STUNT KING
To access the stunt mode, enter TRICKSTER at the cheat code screen.

NEVER HAD AN NES?
If you never had an NES and want to play the original ExciteBike game, simply complete the tutorial mode to unlock the track. The original ExciteBike will appear in the Special Tracks section.

GOOOOOAAAAALLLL
To unlock the motorcycle soccer game, win first place in the Silver round of the Novice Season.

CLIMB THAT PUPPY
To unlock the Hill Climb game, win first place in the Gold round of the Amateur Season.

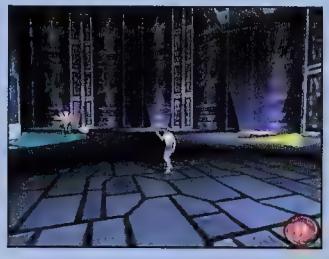
WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN
To unlock a 3D version of the classic, NES ExciteBike game, win first place in the Challenge round of the Pro Season.

MDK2

QUAALUDE CITY
To play the game in slow motion, you will need to get to the level in the game where you play as Max. Start as Max, then hold the R trigger and press Up (x4).

HEY, NICE TRUNKS
The following code will make Kurt appear naked, wearing nothing but his boxer shorts. At the main menu, hold the L + R triggers, simultaneously, and press X (x2), Y, X.

UMMM, EXCUSE ME
To hear Doctor Hawkins pass gas, you will need to get to the level where the doctor is used. When using the doctor press L + R triggers + Left + A to hear him fart.



COOL CAMERA MOVES
To do cool camera tricks around the character, pause the game, then hold the L + R triggers while pressing B, A, B, A. The game will automatically restart and the camera will cut to different angles. To return to the behind the back position, repeat the process.

GROOVY MDK2 SOUNDS
To play all the music from the game, start the Dreamcast without any disk in it. Select the music icon. Once the music screen appears, put in the MDK2 disc.

MDK2 GOODIES GALORE
The designers of MDK2 have included a bunch of audio and visual goodies for anyone who owns a PC. To access the sketches and final artwork of the main characters and enemies, as well as listen to sound clips from the game, simply place the game disk in a PC and open the MDK2 folder.

ROADSTERS

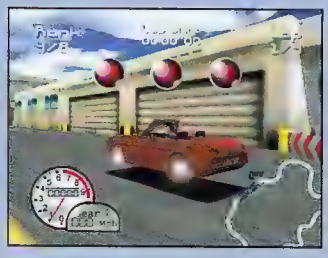
INSTANT MILLION
To start off the game with $1,000,000, at the Driver Select screen, choose a character and then press the Z-Trigger to access the Rename screen and change the name to EasyMoney (case sensitive).

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW
To change to an overhead view of the game, at the Driver Select screen, choose a character and then press the Z-Trigger to access the Rename screen and change the name to Chopper (case sensitive).

YOU BIG CHEATER
To open up all of the tracks, at the Driver Select screen, choose a character and then press the Z-Trigger to access the Rename screen and change the name to Gimme ALL (case sensitive).

DUHHH... PRETTY PICTURES
To improve the graphics of the game, at the Driver Select screen, choose a character and then press the Z-Trigger to access the Rename screen and change the name to Extra rez (case sensitive). Then go to the Options menu and change the Resolution to High.

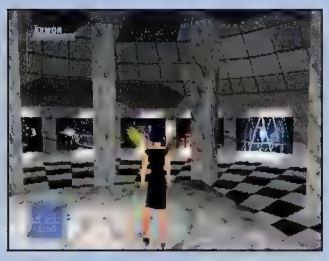
KEEPIN' IT REAL
To turn off all the cheat codes you put in, at the Driver Select screen, choose a character and then press the Z-Trigger to access the Rename screen and change the name to CheatsOff (case sensitive).



COULD THEY BE HOVER-CARS?
To turn the cars into...um...hovercrafts, at the Driver Select screen, choose a character and then press the Z-Trigger to access the Rename screen and change the name to Skywalker (case sensitive).

SYPHON FILTER 2

THE END
To access the End Level cheat, pause a game in play and highlight the Map option. Simultaneously press Right + L2 + R2 + Circle + Square + X. You will hear a sound if performed correctly. Then go to Options and select Cheats. The End Level option will now be selectable, allowing you to skip to the next level whenever you want.



AND THE OSCAR GOES TO?
To access the special movie theatre area where you can view all of the game's FMV clips on both discs, pause the game and highlight the Briefing option. Simultaneously press Right + L1 + R2 + Circle + X. You will hear a sound if performed correctly. Then go to the Options screen and select Cheats to choose the Movies options.

FEEBLE FLAK JACKET
To access Super Agent mode where enemies wearing flak jackets are killed with a single shot, pause the game and highlight the Weaponry option. Simultaneously press Select + L2 + Circle + Square + X. You will hear a sound if performed correctly. Then go to Options and select Cheats. Then go to Super Agent and highlight On. Press Triangle to return to the game.

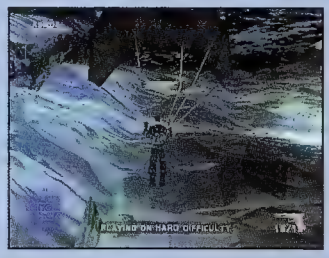
MORE MULTIPLAYER CHARACTERS
To unlock seven additional multiplayer characters, you will need to find the M-79 grenade launcher in the New York Sewers level. The gun is in the parking garage near the end of the level. The gun is on the top landing on top of the parking garage - use the stairwell to get to the landings. The seven new multiplayer characters are Ninja Gabe, Scuba Lian, Unit 1 (the final Boss), Dr. Elsa, Uri Gregorov, Lawrence Mujari, and the SWAT guy who helped in the New York Slums level.

LA VIDA LABORATORY
To unlock the Laboratory level for the multiplayer game, you will need to find the nudie magazine in the Pharcom Laboratory stage. After you use the taser on the guards, you will find the magazine after you go through the Mars exhibit.

DISCO DUCKING
The following information will help you unlock the Disco level for the multiplayer game. In the Disco 32 level, after you kill the guy on the catwalk, you will need to kill all three of the guys that run in the door before any of them has the chance to throw a grenade at you. If you can do this successfully, you will get to battle in the disco.

CAVEMAN CONGO
To unlock the Caves level for the multiplayer game, you will need to find the binoculars in the Colorado Interstate 70 level. The binoculars are in the room behind the first closed door on your left. Go into the room, turn left and go down the hallway until you get to another door. Go in the room and the binoculars are in a box. Grab them and the Caves level will be available.

BUMPIN IN THE BUNKER
To unlock the Bunker level for the multiplayer game, you will need to find the PK-102 in the Moscow Streets level. After the two cars crash, after trying to run you over, go back and search the back end of the car on the right. The gun is inside the car. Be careful of the fire and the two enemies who exit the cars.



THIS IS FRIGGEN HARD
The button combinations in this code are tricky, so practice how you will do it first (or get a friend to help). To change the game difficulty to Hard, enter the following code at the New Game/Load Game screen: highlight New Game, then press and hold (in the following order) Square + Circle + L1 + R2 + Select + Up + X. If done correctly, when the actual gameplay starts, text will appear at the bottom of the screen saying, "Playing on HARD Difficulty." Finishing the game on Hard will unlock four special FMV movies in the theatre area.

TRIPLE PLAY 2001

UNLOCK BABE RUTH
Hit a home run with a pitcher in Season mode.

UNLOCK JACKIE ROBINSON
Steal second base and third base with the same player in a single game in Season mode or steal home in a post-season game.

UNLOCK HANK AARON
Hit four consecutive home runs in a single game in Season mode.

UNLOCK MICKEY MANTEL
Hit a home run over 575 feet in Season mode or win the American League Triple Crown.

UNLOCK LOU GEHRIG
Hit a single, double, triple and home run in a single game in Season mode.

UNLOCK CY YOUNG
Throw 10 consecutive strike-outs or a shut out in Season mode.

UNLOCK WILLIE MAYS
Make four diving catches or hit a single, home run and make a diving catch with the same player in a post-season game.

UNLOCK WILLIE MCCOVEY
Hit three consecutive home runs in Season mode or win the World Series as the S.F. Giants.

UNLOCK FAT PLAYERS
Hit a home run with a player that weighs over 250 pounds.

UNLOCK INVISIBLE PLAYERS
Hit two triples with the same player in a single game in Season mode.

UNLOCK SMALL PLAYERS
Hit twelve hits with a team in a single game.

UNLOCK FAST PLAYERS
Have a player steal three bases in a single game.

UNLOCK TALL PLAYERS
Hit eight hits in a single game.

UNLOCK BIG BATS
Hit two consecutive home runs in Season mode.

UNLOCK FLAMING BALL
Throw six consecutive strike outs in Season mode.

UNLOCK BIG BALLS
Throw nine consecutive strike outs in Season mode.

readers 01.1001

FALLOUT

Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to:
Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215,
Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).

Dear Gamers' Republic,

First off, my compliments on your magazine both online and in hand. Gamers' Republic is the preeminent publication for not only console gaming, but its extras, too (anime, toys, etc.). I'm a 27-year-old gaming enthusiast who, because of a true lack of skills, can't exactly be called a hardcore gamer. But I own my fair share of consoles (perhaps more than my fair share) and keep up to date with the goings on in the gaming world through your help and others who shall remain unnamed.

Because of Sega's history (32X, CD, Saturn...) I was tentative about purchasing a Dreamcast. With the company having pulled support most recently on the Saturn, in the face of its U.S. customers complaints and much to their dismay, I wanted to stand back and watch what the company had in store for consumers. With the impending launch of the PlayStation 2, I felt they had an uphill battle all the way, and with lagging sales in Japan wanted to play it safe. But upon launch, I waited exactly one day and decided the Dreamcast was for me. I was truly impressed with the number of quality launch titles and felt the price was right. With only a small misstep with some badly burned discs, the launch was smooth and we gamers were allowed to witness the rebirth of Sega in all its console gaming bliss. The months to follow saw the release of some truly stellar titles. The thing about the Dreamcast catalog is that regardless of the number of games for the system, the number of quality games proportionally puts the DC at the head of the pack. And many of these aren't just good, they're classics. Soul Calibur, Sonic, Crazy Taxi, MDK2, RE: Code Veronica, DOA2...the list goes on with more set for the immediate future...Jet Grind Radio, Space Channel 5, Grandia II... Add to this the new marketing ploys of a $200 rebate or free DC for signing on with Sega.net plus an additional $50 for new purchasers before a specified date. Add to this Sega's E3 showing. Add to this bleem!Cast. Add to this...the resignation of Sega Japan's president Shoichiro Irimajiri...? Add to this unrealistic ultimatums from Sega Japan to Sega America telling them they must do such-and-such by such-and-such date or Sega's pulling out of the hardware business altogether, abandoning their newest orphan to be?

After much hype, the PlayStation2, so far, has received lukewarm reception by those in the know. Now more than ever it seems the Dreamcast can hold it's own. The marketing strategy in place in the U.S. for Sega is impeccably geared for every gamer looking for quality in their gaming pursuits; hassle free, online, polygon pushing, hardcore and casual gaming with classic titles and new franchises. But make no mistake about it, the big boys in Japan are ultimately pulling the strings, and unless there is a company break-off and Sega America is given full autonomy to continue its hardware pursuits, which is highly unlikely (read "not gonna happen"), Dreamcast owners such as myself are holding the next Saturn.

This is a call to gamers who have as-of-yet not purchased a Dreamcast. With the rebates the company has going on and bleem!'s new emulator coming, just buy the machine! You will not be disappointed, I swear. I have no affiliation with any company mentioned and am not a die-hard Sega fanatic. It just so happens that this machine is a console masterpiece and gaming in and of itself deserves to have the Dreamcast around to continue to impress and please us consumers. The full power of the DC hasn't even been tapped yet. If you truly enjoy gaming, you owe it to yourself to own this machine. Show Sega Japan we Americans do appreciate their fine efforts and would hate to be jilted again. Don't let the Japanese gaming public determine what you have hooked up to your TV, because in this case they are entirely wrong!

R. Brenner

R.B.,

It's good to know that our readers are on the same page as we are. We're as perplexed about this situation as you are, especially after E3. While the PS2 is superior in terms of capabilities, and Sony's long-term forecast calls for sunny skies, right now, the Dreamcast has better games, a head start, a low price, online support, and SOA is more dedicated than ever. This is the Sega we have been screaming for—RPGs, imports (Neo, Space Channel 5, Shenmue, PS Online, etc.), and focus. The last thing we thought we'd see is SOJ jumping in to rain on our parade. I don't believe the Dreamcast is the next Saturn (although I loved the Saturn), or the next 32X or Sega CD (more systems I love.) I'm still hopeful that there's a happy ending in here somewhere.

Dear GR,

How's it going guys? I'm writing this letter to basically find out what happened to Square. Who, in my opinion, used to be the greatest RPG makers in the business, with their flagship Final Fantasy series leading the pack. I remember back on the Super NES, Final Fantasy meant awesome character designs, characters exuding personality, epic storylines, beautifully orchestrated music, and gripping drama that rivaled the finest theatre productions. Then came Square on the PlayStation. All of the sudden Final Fantasy meant humdrum storylines, cookie-cutter characters, no drama, crappy graphics, thrown together musical scores, and CG cut scenes (to sell RPGs to an American market that are suckers for pretty graphics). I mean if I wanted an RPG with no story, poor characters design, and crappy 3-D graphics, I'd buy a PC RPG. I'll admit they sold record numbers of the games, but not to the real fans. The only people I know that liked FF 7 and 8 were the same ones that never would have touched them before. To me, if you have to sell out your fan base to sell copies of games to people that before would sooner slit there wrists than to play your games, you as a company have lost focus and respect. I mean, all the CG cuts scenes in Final Fantasy 7 and 90210 (I mean 8) put together don't even begin to rival that found in just the opera scene in FF3 (VI) or Palom and Porom turning themselves to stone in FF2 (IV). When Aeris died in 7 I could have cared less, as the only thing that died was a polygon mess. I admit Square has had some highlights on the PlayStation, mainly Xenogears and Final Fantasy Tactics, but when, if ever, am I going to get my Square (i.e. not the sellout version) back? I see that they got Amano (god of artists) back on for FF IX and his illustrations look amazing for the game (what's this, character design back in a Final Fantasy game?), and the story seems to be taking shape in the vein of older Final Fantasy games, they still have some work to do. If they can get the remaining missing pieces back together, mainly personality in those horrific polygonal models, and an epic soundtrack, and some semblance of drama, we may well have a true Final Fantasy game on the PlayStation. Then maybe we will finally have an RPG that is better than Final Fantasy 2, 3, and Chrono Trigger. I can only hope this is the case. That's all I have to say for now. I'll tackle the whole what-happened-to-Electronic-Arts (I mean let's face it, if it weren't for blind loyalty to a franchise name, they would sell about 5 games a year) in another letter as this one is going too long as it is.

Shawn Stokes

Shawn,

I'll tell you what happened: America got smart, discovered the magic, and bought some of it. Kaching! While they still make beautiful games, for the most part they are not nor will they ever be as epic as before, simply because they have so many teams working under so many deadlines. It's all about pleasing the masses now. Come put flowers on the grave my friend, or embrace what remains. Revel in the beautiful games like Legend of Mana and Vagrant Story and realize there are still flashes of greatness at Square - you just have to look a bit harder to find them. Still, overall, they make some of the best games around and are an extremely dedicated group. Can you tell I'm playing Legend of Mana?

▸ NINTENDO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

GR: What can you tell me about Conker's Bad Fur Day and, with the whole theme of that game, what type of planning did you have as far as message points about the content of the game?

GH: Well, the sales and marketing team saw the game for the first time about four or five months ago, so it was our first chance to find out that Conker was not the cute, little, fury animal that we thought he was (laughter). We looked at it and tried to make sure that we kept in mind who the audience is for that product. We have to remind people that it's designed for an audience, and it certainly is not for the younger gamers, but it also may not be for some of the adults who are wandering around making business decisions here. But there is a hardcore group of people interested in gaming who are in their twenties and thirties, who love things like Beavis-and-Butthead and South Park and if we just keep that in perspective and sort of direct our marketing strictly at those people we should be in very good shape.

GR: How do you see the industry going in the next three to five years with broadband and online? Does Nintendo have an online strategy that you can talk about?

GH: We don't have all the details in place. I think that for us, any of those strategies always start with the gaming experience. And whatever we do, it's going to be something that enhances the gaming experience, make it more fun. When we think about wireless for Game Boy Advance or connectivity for Dolphin, it's those aspects we think about first, and we worry a little bit less about the general infrastructure. Because all it is is a pipeline and a way to communicate with people. Game content is much more important than trying to turn it into an Internet access point. **GR**

▸ MICROSOFT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 68

games industry and we talked a lot to developers...and one of the lessons we learned is that for a feature like a hard drive, that you really want to be a part of, maybe not every game, but certainly the definition of what makes up an X-Box game. You kind of have to include it with every console. When you make it an option, like the Sega 32X or Sega CD, it's really tough for a developer to count on that being there in any sizable way, especially if it's an expensive proposition like the Sega CD was. So unless you can make the case to a developer that a big percentage of their customers will have a hard drive, they have a bit of a quandary. What do they do? Do they design two games - one that runs if the hard drive is there and one that runs if it's not? It was a difficult decision for us to make. It's an expensive proposition. It raises all sorts of difficult design criteria, like making sure that it will pass all the drop tests and that it can't get corrupted and that sort of thing. And we're addressing all of those issues. But ultimately, we felt that it was something that was going to contribute in a real significant way to the quality of the product.

GR: Do you think that there's room for four systems in the industry?

KB: I'm probably the wrong person to ask about that. There's a ton of analysts out there who look at these sorts of things and try to figure out how the markets grow and shrink and different market share dynamics happen. What we have found in talking to consumers is that the idea of Xbox is something that really excites them. And the promise of the kinds of games that can be produced for Xbox is something that really captures their imagination. **GR**

▸ MIYAMOTO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 73

GR: A lot of American online games get a portion of their thrills from the depiction of violence. Is it difficult to avoid this when making multiplayer games?

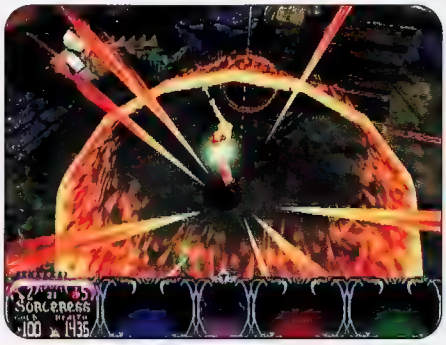
SM: The most popular online game among the Nintendo staff currently is Ultima Online, but they understand the attraction of the violence. And I think it is possible to make online games that are not violent at all, but violence seems to be the easiest approach somehow. Maybe when violence is included, if you are defeated, you feel really upset and you really want to try again and again, and it's an easy way to get people involved.

GR: The last time we spoke, you talked of your interest in gardening as a refuge from your duties. How is your garden coming?

SM: It's about 80 percent complete. Now, the trees are starting to grow! **GR**

▸ GAUNTLET LEGENDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 96

If you're looking for an old-school romp infused with just enough strategy to keep your brain from going numb, Gauntlet Legends will keep you enthralled for days. Just imagine Zombies Ate My Neighbors in 3D, covering the primordial gamut from medieval, goth, and ancient Egyptian to all things mystical and you'll have a good idea of what Legends has in store. **GR**



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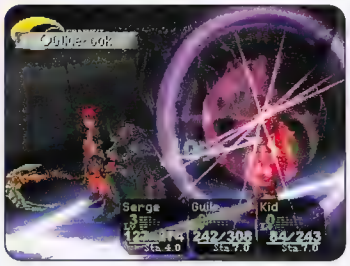
▸ *CHRONO CROSS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85*

In battle, three characters are chosen to confront the world's many wonderfully designed and impressively constructed enemies, which reward your victories with periodic level-ups rather than the typical experience points. The battles are innovative and involving, fusing familiar turn-based system with more flexible and interactive elements. Your characters must balance stamina, elemental magic, recovery times and combination attacks for ultimate success. It's a great system that becomes even better the farther you go through the game.

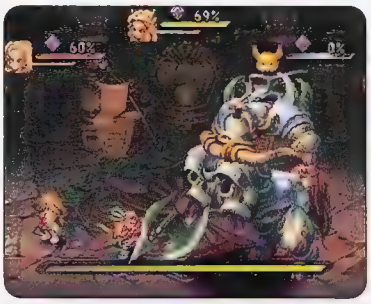


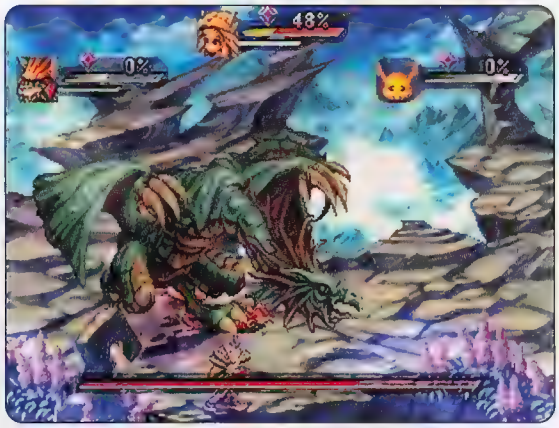
And the farther you go through the game, the more you realize that Square has made one of its best RPGs in years. **GR**

▸ *LEGEND OF MANA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 100*

you never really get to learn or care about the world's trippy characters. It's too bad, because they seem like they have so much more to tell. Another quip is the game is a tad easy: most of the massive bosses are pushovers.

But when Square throws in extras like raising pets, growing crops, and the ability to build your world, it's easy to overlook minor faults. Legend of Mana has enough depth and fun for everyone. Even after reviewing the game, I'm going to go back and play it again and again, which is possibly the best thing I can say about a game. **GR**





▸ *ANIME-JUNGLE DE IKOU, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 122*

the size of her boobs. Anyway, using her newfound bod Mii/Natsumi whips up a powerful spell that...makes the whale fly. Flyin' whales in the first 15 minutes! You're either running out to buy this or thoroughly disgusted by now, so I'll refrain from spoiling the next 75 minutes. Amidst all this weirdness, the animation borders on great, the character design is superb, and the level of exaggeration, like those famous nose bleed-inducing boobs, are boldly overemphasized. If you like it weird, don't miss this one. **GR**

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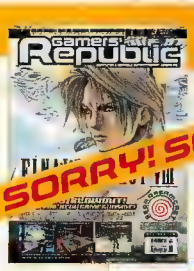

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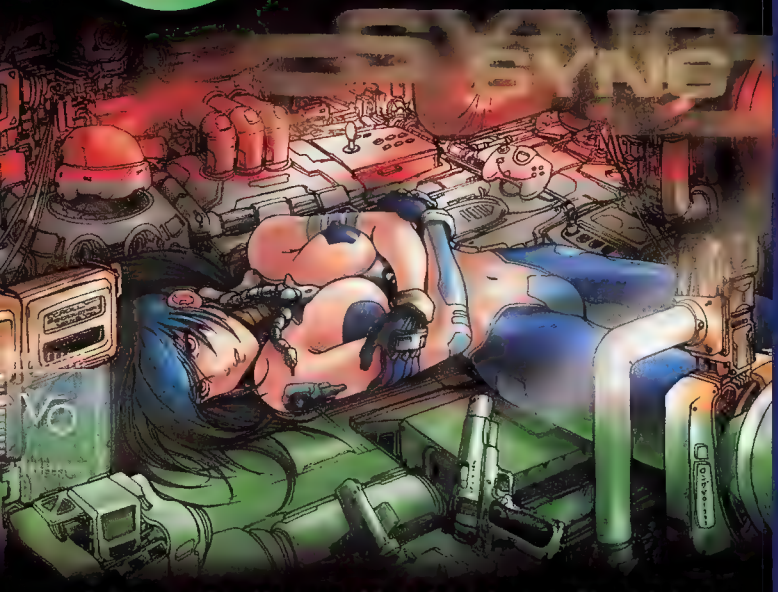

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With E3 now behind us, we can begin to prepare for the onslaught of new games that will follow, leading up to the release of the PS2 here in America and the Dolphin and GB Advance in Japan later this year. In the meantime, we plan on blowing the pelts off of Acclaim's much-anticipated Fur Fighters—one of the brightest new stars in the Dreamcast galaxy. 3D action, shooting and adventure just doesn't get much better. Not yet at least. Look for Parasite Eve 2, Spawn, and a little something special from Ubi Soft as well.

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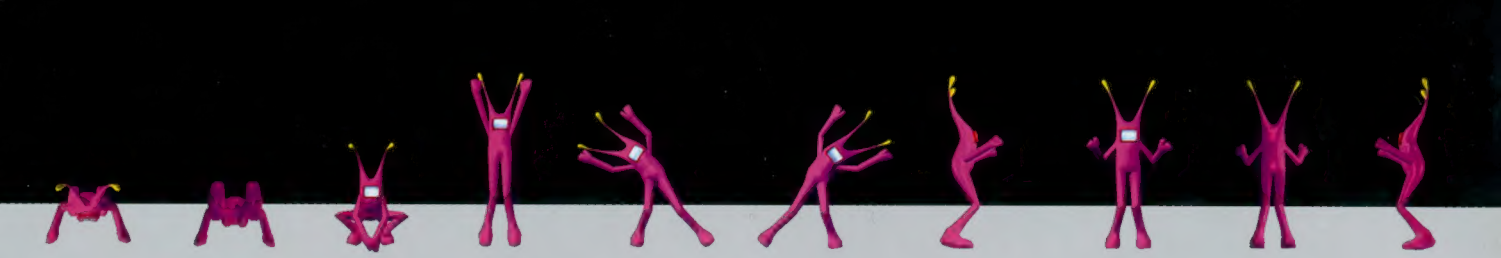

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Sega Dreamcast
IT'S THINKING

*No Morollans are actually harmed in this game. Their little souls are returned to the planet Morolla where they are recycled and go on to live happy, productive lives.

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